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FROM THE BIG ISSUE TO YOU

MERRY
CHRISTMAS

FROM THE BIG ISSUE TO YOU

MERRY CHRISTMAS





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NO. 1184

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Welcome to the bumper Christmas edition of **The Big Issue** – packed full of festive treats. We hope you agree it's a cracker! By buying this magazine you are supporting vendors like us, some of the hundreds of men and women up and down the country who are working towards a brighter future. From all of us at The Big Issue, we wish you a very Merry Christmas!



OUR MANIFESTO

● WE BELIEVE

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not a handout...**

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control of their lives since
1991, and in the process
created a global blueprint
for social change.

● WE BELIEVE

in trade, not aid...

Which is why we ask that
you ALWAYS take your
copy of the magazine – it's
a bloody good read and our
sellers are working and need
your custom.

● WE BELIEVE

poverty is indiscriminate...

Which is why we provide
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blighted by poverty with
the opportunity to earn a
LEGITIMATE income.

● WE BELIEVE

in the right to citizenship...

Which is why The Big Issue
Foundation, our charitable
arm, helps sellers tackle their
social and financial exclusion.

● WE BELIEVE

in prevention...

Which is why Big Issue
Invest offers backing and
investments between
£50,000–£1.75m to social
enterprises, charities and
businesses which deliver
social value to communities.



@Fairy_elephant

Well done to the chap selling the @BigIssue on Earlsdon St. A lady fell and bumped her head and he ran to help giving her his coat.

Dickens: the twist

I'm pleased John Bird exposed Dickens' hypocrisy on property rights [November 30–December 6]. Dickens appropriated Robert Seymour's characters in *The Pickwick Papers*. Fagin's portrayal in *Oliver Twist* is anti-Semitic. But his repugnant personality extends further.

Dickens also travestied John Rae's character during Sir John Franklin's widow's campaign. Rae discovered Franklin's crew resorted to cannibalism while trying to find the Northwest Passage. But Dickens rejected Rae's evidence. Instead, he accused the Inuit: "We believe every savage to be in his heart covetous, treacherous and cruel." Consequently, Rae was robbed of his credit for being the real discoverer of the Passage.

Dickens' racist comments were extreme, even for his time. Yet this man has a reputation as a sympathiser with the poor and oppressed of the Victorian era, a reputation quite undeserved, yet which persists. Humbug!
Ian R Mitchell, Glasgow

Surely Dickens can't be responsible for the fate of a family because of a brief association that broke up? His success would've come about if Pickwick had never been heard of. How many people read *The Pickwick Papers* today? More read *A Christmas Carol*; a story that Condemns Wealth gained at the expense of the poor.

Dickens was not perfect but his books couldn't have been written without a great deal of human warmth. Placing his life under a magnifying glass will show his blemishes but few of his efforts for social justice. Maybe he was a great writer because of his imperfections rather than despite them.

Whatever the criticism – some justified – his works endure. Readers recognise such stories couldn't have been composed without an inspired desire for human improvement.
T Springthorpe, Southend on Sea

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COMMENT OF THE WEEK

Thanks to a vendor's help, small change was no big issue

Had a heart-warming experience last week.

As I headed into Sainsbury's with a Spanish friend I had given a lift to, I stopped to buy a Big Issue from the vendor near the entrance. I was aghast when I put my hand in my bag and found my wallet wasn't there. The vendor and my friend both watched, concerned, as I mentally retraced my steps before realising it was safe in another bag. I apologised to the vendor for being unable to buy a magazine while my friend got a trolley designed for wheelchair/Zimmer frame users. I asked him why he was choosing that one. He said he didn't have a £1 coin for the other sort. At that point, the vendor held out a £1 coin and said we could return it to him when we finished our shopping which, of course, we did. By this time we had change and were also able to buy a copy of The Big Issue. Simple story but the engagement was heart-warming and we all benefitted.

Sally Guyer, Cambridge

@katkins1982

The @BigIssue seller in Newbury is a legend. Today he's dressed up as a Christmas tree, complete with lights!



HE'S A BIG PERSONALITY

@DickieArmour
Me with the global phenomenon that is Jack Richardson a @BigIssue seller outside @btptcafes #bristol

Portrait of a vendor

I bought a copy from Steve outside the National Portrait Gallery today. He's going to Walsall for Christmas for the first time in four years, having worked hard to make it happen. Couldn't be more pleased, I hope he has a lovely time.
Harriet, London

Big effort

Your magazine is such a good read! [Nov 30–Dec 6] The letter about firewood was fascinating; the charms of birdsong, enlightening; Hurst Castle, informative; Anastacia, revealing and so unassuming!; the truth about Dickens, another tarnished reputation; Street Art, inspiring!; a vendor's love story, why not?; Bob the Cat, so entertaining!; films on Homelessness, about time!; Hoover Advert, hilarious!; Eric Idle, good humoured as ever; puzzles, challenging!
Mary Carden (62 years young!)

Celebrating vendors

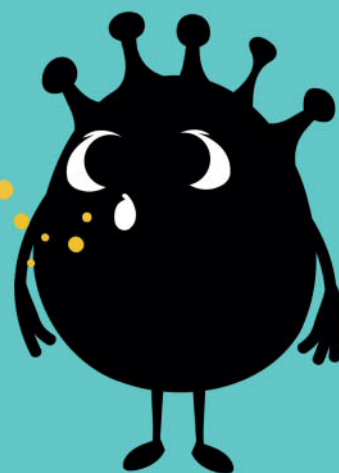
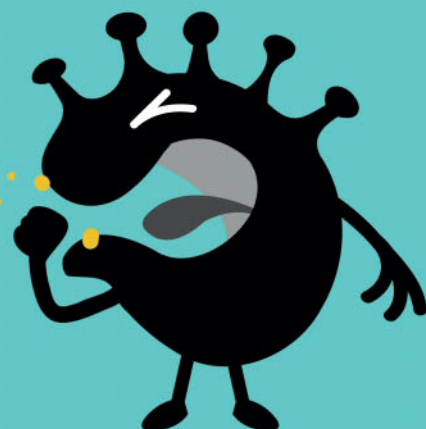
Thank you Euzeffina for my first Christmas card of the year. Her pitch is at Tesco, Staple Hill high street, Bristol. She's always smiling and gives cuddles to my kids who adore her – she brightens up the high street.
Zoe Almond, Bristol

FEEDBACK LOOP

David Taylor wrote in [Nov 30–Dec 6] using capitalism as a reason for the art world's fetishisation of naked women. But for this reader, he didn't give the full picture.

David is missing one important fact about capitalism: it doesn't understand morals, just the laws of supply and demand. Making money from sexualised pictures of naked women works but that doesn't make it right. In fact, it makes things worse because it tells all of us it's okay to objectify, not value, half the human race. That's not good for anybody. We do live in a capitalist society governed by supply and demand but it's also governed by morals, and we forget that at our peril.
Hamish Wills, Bristol

PEOPLE
COUGHING,
TALKING, EVEN
BREATHING
CAN PROJECT
FLU PARTICLES
INTO THE AIR



Because our immune system weakens with age, older people are more susceptible to flu and have a higher risk of developing serious, or even life-threatening, complications from it. A yearly flu vaccination can help protect against flu and is free for those aged 65 and over.

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'Tis the season for unabashed sentimentality



I love the story of Edward Hardy. He's 93. As dementia began to close in, he was moved into a nursing home in his village in Somerset. He wasn't particularly happy. He missed his wife. It wasn't dark yet but it was getting there. Then, one of the staff learned Edward had played in a jazz trio for 30 years. It might be an idea to get Edward playing, he thought.

So, he found a keyboard for him and placed a speculative ad on Gumtree asking if anybody would be keen to join Edward for a few tunes. Over 80 musicians replied. A saxophonist has already been in, and a bassist is on the way. The result for Edward has been remarkable. Though no longer able to read music, a door opens when he plays. The fog lifts and he is transported. It all comes back.

The redemptive power of music is right there.

All of us have a piece of music that moves us. There is no wrong. I knew somebody who genuinely thought *Under the Moon of Love* by Showaddywaddy was a thing of peerless beauty.

At its best music allows us to drop our guard. It changes us and frequently it allows a certain wallowing in sentimentality. And, from time to time, there is nothing wrong with a certain wallowing in sentimentality.

At The Big Issue, we go big at Christmas. Had we been around in Cromwell's time, we would have been goosed.

We have five magazines for the season, each with a little more of Christmas to it than the last. We understand that Christmas works for

our vendors, so we deliver. People are more likely to buy the magazine at this time of year. There is a certain interest in doing something for society's outsiders as society feasts and closes around families.

Call this sentimentality, call it a reactive response, call it whichever way you see it, but that doesn't matter. From wherever it springs it is a GOOD response.

The Big Issue exists to provide the homeless and those at risk of homelessness with a means of making a living. The income (boosted at Christmas) is part of this. It's a big part, of course. But so too is the interaction with people on the street. So many of our vendors talk about the importance of people simply chatting to them. At Christmas, this increases. It's goodwill in the bank. Everybody benefits. Sentimental maybe, but it makes a big difference.

In 2016, The Big Issue turns 25. For that length of time we have been offering an opportunity for those with nothing to earn and to work their way back into the sort of life most of us take for granted.

Thanks for being with us for which-ever steps you've taken. Without every single reader, we are nowhere. And with every single reader, we'll continue working for the men and women out there for as long as we're needed.

Be as sentimental as you like. Allow yourself to become, as Heaney said, vulnerable to delight. Have a wonderful Christmas. It makes a difference.

Paul McNamee is editor of The Big Issue
@pauldmcnamee

Illustration: Lauren Crow

OFF THE GRID...



THE ART OF FIXING HOMELESSNESS

A housing regeneration project has won Britain's highest art accolade. And we at The Big Issue think this is A VERY GOOD THING.

Assemble – a collective of artists, architects and designers – won the Turner Prize for fixing up 10 dilapidated houses in Liverpool and creating a buzzing new community.

The project was as much a feat of determination and inspiration as art: a Victorian terrace in Toxteth, earmarked for demolition to make way for new flats, was saved after Assemble joined with local people to form a Community Land Trust and transformed it into a hip, green, much-loved district.

After last week's Turner win the nation predictably asked "but is it art?". But even more importantly people started asking: "why aren't we doing this everywhere?" It's a question we have been pushing with our Fill 'Em Up campaign, which you can read about on page 17.

A head of steam has built up around empty property that could offer shelter for people who need it. Gary Neville opening up his Stock Exchange property to shelter homeless people (including Wesley Hall, below) in Manchester for the winter, before it's developed into a hotel, fired imaginations. And Russell Brand (below right) joining sit-in activists saving habitable homes in London from demolition shone a light on houses that could be brought back into use.

The Big Issue's Fill 'Em Up campaign has inspired and united individuals, activists, charities, including Shelter, and councils across the country. They are identifying buildings that could be reused, and coming up with brilliant ideas to make it happen.

Assemble's Turner win has put the scandal of wasted buildings top of the agenda, but it doesn't stop there: Granby Four Streets' next project is a workshop working as a social enterprise, proving beyond doubt that social enterprise is the hot new hipster movement.

We will continue our fight to Fill 'Em Up in 2016. We're just getting started – join us!
editorial@bigissue.com
@BigIssue



FROM THE VAULT... CHRISTMAS 2007 NO. 775

Take That give us the inside story of their remarkable comeback, while Gary Barlow says of Robbie Williams: "He's just not going to be in the band", proving Barlow is better at singing than predicting the future. We also chart the progress of the fight against HIV in Zambia.



PAUSE

THE RANT

MISSING AT CHRISTMAS

THIS IS A TIME WHEN FAMILIES GATHER BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE SOMEONE MISSING? SOPHIE LAPHAM, MISSING PEOPLE'S DIRECTOR OF SERVICES, TALKS ABOUT THEIR WORK FINDING AND REUNITING LOVED ONES...

You can't grieve for your missing loved one in the way that you can for somebody who's died. One of the things that is really difficult from a family's perspective is that they won't necessarily know the reason for somebody going missing. The unknown can be very difficult to live with. We have an understanding of what ambiguous loss means and how difficult that is for families to deal with.

We also work with missing people themselves. We understand that adults have the right to go missing and our concern is about checking that they're safe and well. Being estranged from your family can be very isolating. People can feel a lot of pressure to get back in contact but they might find that very difficult for lots of reasons. We can help them if they feel they want to do that.

It's quite comforting for families to know that their loved-ones can call us and that there's support for them, without putting pressure on that person. When a person does come back it's not necessarily the end of the problems, in fact it's the start of a new chapter. There can be lots of challenges. We're there to support both sides.

Each week these services bring 29 people back to their families or get them to a place of safety. Call or text 116 000 missingpeople.org.uk

**missing
people**

● Tell us about a campaign or issue you care about and the change you want. @bigissue; editorial@bigissue.com

Illustration: Mitch Blunt



ANGUS FARQUHAR

How to hear the walls sing

I went to a service for All Souls after losing my mum earlier this year; you light a candle, a full choir was singing. I took enormous comfort from that sound of the pure voice focused on ritual intent. The deeper qualities of pure and focused thought have an impact, that sense of creating a heightened atmosphere in a building that either is or was a church, mosque or synagogue. Something has often been imbued into the walls.

Near Cardross, a discrete village on the Firth of Clyde, in the old woods of Kilmahew is what is fabled to be the greatest modernist ruin in the UK, St Peter's Seminary. Fifty years old in 2016, it was a love letter to architect Le Corbusier. So bold, ambitious, provocative and poetic that even now, ravaged by fires, theft and 25 years of vandalism, it takes your breath

away. That first time wandering through the skeletal mega structure, I glimpsed a shadowy figure moving along the high balustrades and froze hearing the random tolling of an old bell. Traces of the past life of the building had re-manifested, in a spine-tingling scene worthy of Kubrick or Polanski.

Quite often when I go to St Peter's I listen to religious music. I recorded Islamic calls to prayer, and listened as darkness fell. Because of the building's structure, I felt like I was transported to North Africa.

To me, sound is central to a perception of building knowledge from and about a location, and our first event at Kilmahew/St Peter's, *Hinterland*, includes a choral soundscape by contemporary classical composer Rory Boyle. Haunting and evocative music – recorded with the St Salvator's Chapel Choir from

St Andrews University – will be electro-acoustically manipulated. It will seem to emanate from the pores of the building, using a multi-speaker array. We wanted the building itself to 'breathe'.

You have to make a conscious decision to hear the landscape around you, just as it's good to raise your head above shop level and see the architecture of a city. It's good to open yourself up to these possibilities. I don't subscribe to the dogma of Christianity or Islam but they got the ritual right. Music in a dedicated ritual space, it's very powerful. There's nothing like it.

Angus Farquhar is creative director of NVA, producers of large-scale public art. *Hinterland* at St Peter's Seminary (March 18-27) launches Scotland's Festival of Architecture 2016. hinterland.org

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No.55

Blow-up Bridge

REGENT'S CANAL, LONDON

The Regent's Canal project was proposed by canal entrepreneur Thomas Homer and approved in 1812. One of the directors was architect John Nash, who integrated the canal into his masterplan for the area and got his friend, the Prince Regent, to lend the new waterway his name.

Three years later Homer was found guilty of embezzling the company's funds and sentenced to transportation. Shareholders were approached for a fresh injection of cash. The first section, from Paddington to Camden, opened in 1816 and the second section to the Thames at Limehouse Basin



was completed in 1820. The enterprise cost more than £770,000, twice the original estimate. Macclesfield Bridge, or Blow-up Bridge as it has come to be called, was destroyed in the early hours of

October 2, 1874, when a barge carrying gunpowder exploded, killing three boatmen.

The canal was closed for four days. On reconstructing the bridge, the great fluted metal columns were turned around as deep grooves (inset) had been cut into them by the tow ropes between the barges and the horses pulling them. The grooves are deeper on the older side, suggesting a lessening of wear as horses were displaced by motors.

OS Grid Reference: TQ 274833

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FORWARD THINKING... 3D masterpieces.

The Unseen Art Project is making artwork like the *Mona Lisa* available for blind and visually impaired people to enjoy. "There are many in the world who have heard of classical artworks their whole lives but are unable to see them," says Marc Dillon. "This would be a revolution to get blind people going to galleries." He is crowdfunding to create an online repository where artists can contribute data of artworks anyone with a 3D printer can print out.

MY PECCADILLO



JACK ASHTON CALL THE MIDWIFE MAN OF GOD

BOXING

My love of boxing began in the 1990s, watching those great middleweights Nigel Benn, Chris Eubank and Michael Watson with my dad. Eubank was the technician, Benn had power and passion, Watson was a mix. But my favourite fighter is Joe Calzaghe, who I saw beat Jeff Lacy in Manchester (below).

I have been boxing for nine months. I train in Hackney. In my head, when I'm boxing, I'm like Eubank. But I am new to it, so in reality I'm a punchbag. Today, my trainer hit me all around the ring to encourage me to move my feet better. By the end I was getting emotional, it almost put me off boxing for life! The dance training for *Children In Need does Strictly* improved my balance, though.

Boxing doesn't make you more aggressive, it leaves you calmer. But having that ability to evade punches makes you



less wary of aggressive, drunken people when walking home from the pub at 1am. Some friends have done Zero to Hero, the white collar boxing thing. They train you for three months then pair you with someone of the same weight and ability for a three-round charity fight. I am toying with the idea of doing it. It would be a brilliant challenge but I'm worried about being knocked unconscious in front of friends and family after 10 seconds.

Call The Midwife returns on Christmas Day. @jackjashton



A GOOD TALKING TO

Every week the biggest stars of showbiz, sport and politics tell of their great loves, joys and deepest regrets in our Letter to my Younger Self interview. It's unlike anything you'll read elsewhere. Here is a selection from 2015 you will want to share.

"Me and my missus, we were together until she died 10 years ago of cancer. I'm in love with her still. I first saw her down Canvey Island youth club, when I was 16. My band played the school leavers' party and I danced with her, and her friend told me I'd been dancing with Irene. That's the first time I heard her name. A few weeks later I got to walk her home and I kissed her outside her gate. It knocked me off my feet. I just went Blammo! And I remember when she died, I went to see her in the morgue. She was lying on this table. God, Jesus man... She looked like a saint. And I kissed her. And she was cold. I remember that last kiss and I remember the first kiss and there were 40 years in between."

WILKO JOHNSON, Dr Feelgood rocker

"I was ready for most aspects of the music industry but when I met the producer Joe Meek, that threw me off a bit. Because he was a homosexual. I thought, wait a minute, is the London scene, the people who run British showbusiness – are there a lot of homosexuals involved here? Because if so, I'm going back to Cardiff. I became paranoid, you see. I wondered, was that required to make a hit record? Once I got over the shock of that, and realised it wasn't true, most people were normal. Well, I shouldn't put it like that. Homosexuals are normal, it's not that they're not normal. It's just that they are what they are."

TOM JONES, Singer

"Being an Irish Catholic – that stuff enters the bloodstream when you're very young, no matter how you feel about it. When I was growing up we were the only family I knew who didn't go to church. It wasn't a passive rejection, it was a passionate, violent rejection. I loathe the church. I'm always amazed when people go on about what a progressive

forward-looking guy Pope Francis is – he's just another 500-year-old man in a dress talking about other people's business, issuing edicts from a system based on the sayings of a political revolutionary from 2,000 years ago."

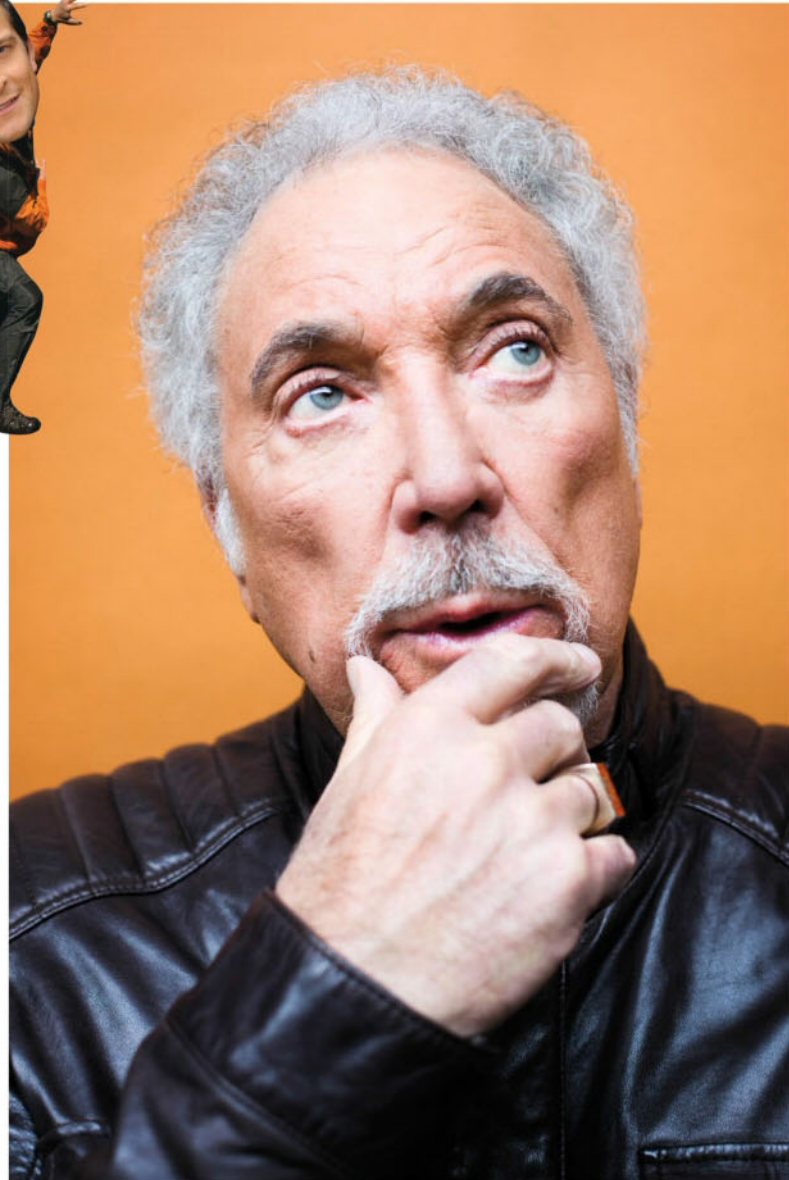
DYLAN MORAN, Comedian

"It scared me half to death when my grandmother was diagnosed with cancer. I've seen a lot of people pass in the neighbourhood, I've lost them to motorcycles or altercations or drugs. But none of them impacted like when my grandmother died. She was the love of my life."

50 CENT, Rapper and actor

"I got my breast cancer diagnosis the same day I lost my dad. I couldn't go home for my father's funeral because I had to have surgery and start my treatment. I think we find strength we don't expect to have. I had a daughter by then, Chloe was just a little girl, so I had a reason to live and be strong. I made a decision that I was going to be alright. And after that I had a deep-down belief that I would be."

OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN, Singer and actress





"I'd tell my teenage self to really appreciate having his dad around. He died when I was in my early 20s. He was a wonderful dad, really cosy and fun. He really encouraged me to go for things. He told me to look after my friends and follow my heart. If he'd lived longer I would have shown the gratitude you don't always show when you're young."

BEAR GRYLLS, Adventurer and TV presenter

"I've been to Everest three times and broken the world record. I've been to the North Pole, all the mountains of the lost world, and Russia and South America, and God knows what. I've just completed 600 hours of space training in Moscow and I am now a fully trained cosmonaut. They want to put me into the International Space Station next year. So I'll be going up there in my 80th year."

BRIAN BLESSED, Actor

"When I was chosen to be a Bond girl I felt full of confidence, for about two minutes. Mercifully I had Richard Attenborough as my father-in-law. He'd give me advice. He said the day you believe your own publicity, you're dead. If you believe them when they say you're the best thing since sliced bread, you have to believe them when they say you're an awful human being."

JANE SEYMOUR, Actress

"I'm glad I did the cover of *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. It's nearly 50 years ago and people still talk about it. If I could go back and do it again there are lots of people I'd include – I should have put Chuck Berry in it."

SIR PETER BLAKE, Pop art pioneer

"When I was 16 my family were going through hard times. I used to go to the big old city library in LA a lot but when I was 16 it burned down. I still remember watching it on the news. I had a tear in my eye. I sought refuge in the library, the one place I could spend as much time as I wanted and it didn't cost me any money."

BECK, Musician

"My [facial] cancer scare was a tough one. The doctors didn't pull any punches. They were very open about how severe it was. Going into the operating theatre, I was very emotional. A brush with death is never going to be easy. It quickly made me focus on the things that I hadn't done that I wished I'd done."

MICHAEL FLATLEY, Dance impresario

"I believe actors are like athletes – and James Gandolfini was the greatest. He was like a great boxer. Working with him for six seasons of *The Sopranos* [Bracco played psychiatrist, Dr Jennifer Melfi], all those scenes in the office were like a verbal boxing match. It was so intense. I loved working with him – it was fantastic. I adored him. I miss him."

LORRAINE BRACCO, Actress

"If people can't understand how I fell in love with men and am now married to a woman – well, that's their problem. I fell in love with both. We can't be boxed in – get over it. There are genuine shades of sexuality, that's the only way you can explain it."

MARY PORTAS, High street guru



Clockwise from top left:
Bear Grylls, Tom Jones,
Wilko Johnson, 50 Cent,
Olivia Newton-John and
Jane Seymour

For more Letter To My Younger Selves go to bigissue.com

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From problems to solutions – such is the whirligig of life



The word whirligig, which features among other places in Shakespeare, also made it to our black and white TV screens in the 1950s. At a time when you did not boast of your summer holiday, or how much you can drink on a Saturday night, or how many gadgets or Facebook friends you possessed, inches was the big discussion. And I am not being rude here.

The inches distinguished the size of your TV screen. With many of the early screens starting at 15 inches across, to get an 18-incher was an achievement. But to morph to a 21 or 23in screen suggested a whopper's paradise.

The Whirligigs was an American TV show featuring police officers that were based in helicopters; hence the 'whirligig' of spinning blades, and the mess and dust it made when it ascended or landed.

It was mesmerising. We sat and watched consumerism before it even arrived. As common folk went on holiday and got stuck in cabins and drove cars that were as big as small flats. And robbers shot at policemen, having eaten a good breakfast of hamburgers and drunk loads of aromatic coffee.

On the morning of my introduction into the House of Lords I woke up around the corner from where I was raised as a child and had watched this diet of TV struggles. I had chosen the particular Premier Inn because I wanted to get a sense of that word 'whirligig' for me. The sense that I had gone through a social maelstrom (another nice word suggesting change and disorder, and chaos) since those days watching the cops beat the robbers.

I wanted to remind myself that I had been born into a particular kind of world, and yet had arrived at another.

I took the bus to the Houses of Parliament, pointing out to my youngest son where I learned to ride a bike, got beaten up, and revenged the beating later, and got my first job; working for a sanitary engineers called of all things Thomas Crapper and Co. And the toilet wall I vainly tried to scale to get away from the

policemen who had come to arrest me for jumping bail, among other things.

And then the fear set in at the Palace of Westminster, knowing that I was soon to don the ermine and swear allegiance to the Queen.

My wife said I looked like the condemned man as I came out before my fellow



Peter Mullan stars in *Hector* – go and see it!

peers in the chamber, who fortunately do not have to go through the ritual more than once in their lifetime. The ceremony was truly frightening and if you see the Parliament Channel you'll see a grown man caught like a rabbit in the headlights.

Anyone born just before the invention of the welfare state who has lived on into our digital era will have seen maelstroms and whirligigs galore, as wars have come and gone, fortunes won and lost, wealth of untold levels achieved in our consumerist, market-mad world.

And seas that have filled up with plastics, and skies full of planes.

But my whirligig has been somewhat exaggerated, even for the times we have

passed through. Why? Because of the slums of childhood and the 12 families sharing one toilet, (I joke at times about having to book a crap two days ahead). And then homelessness, orphanage, prison and rough sleeping.

Starting off being a part of the problem, yet eventually becoming a part of the solution.

The whirligig continues. There is much work to do. We live in difficult times for people, though it is true to say we always have. As I keep saying, my interest is to try and get inside the box working, because for all of the work you do outside of it, the box – government – is creating many of the problems. I hope to bring my experiences to bear on legislation that may often, through the laws of unintended consequences, lead to further suffering.

The Big Issue itself is going through a number of developments as it reaches its maturity. Its dogged determination to "give a hand up not a handout" is not entirely understood as a necessary rallying point for helping people. Many get it but still handouts outnumber hand-ups tenfold; ie opportunities to improve your conditions, rather than just get you through the day.

After the ceremony at the House of Lords I went to see *Hector*, an incredibly moving film starring Peter Mullan and featured in The Big Issue two weeks ago. The main homeless character Hector haunts you long after the film, which must be seen, and accompanied me for the next few days. The capturing of homelessness, and the deep, personal dignity of many caught in grief, shines through. And though it is about suffering and loss, it is remarkably upbeat.

I do hope you have a good Christmas. I hope you keep in mind those that don't, and won't. It's a terrible whirligig that goes on for the many. Our new year must be about more hand-ups for them, out of the grief and into the good life that we all wish on all. Happy Christmas. And a splendid New Year.

The whirligig continues.

John Bird is the founder and Editor in Chief of The Big Issue. @johnbirdswords
john.bird@bigissue.com

"The capturing of homelessness shines through in the film"

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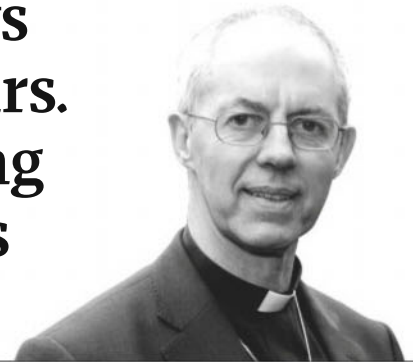


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There will always be doubts and fears. But refugees bring gifts for all of us



It was a bright September morning in Canterbury when I bumped into a member of the clergy pushing a trolley full of clothes, blankets and toys. I asked her what she was doing. “Oh, these are donations from local churches,” she replied. “We’ve got four carloads to take across to Calais.”

That was a few weeks after the harrowing image of three-year-old Aylan al-Kurdi laying drowned on a beach in Turkey sent a shockwave of grief and shame around the world.

The scale of the problem we are facing as a global human family is astonishing. More than half a million people have crossed the Mediterranean and Aegean so far this year. They are fleeing war, persecution and deprivation in Syria and Afghanistan, Iraq and Eritrea, and other countries.

As the number of people arriving in Europe continues to rise, nearly 3,000 people making the journey have drowned like Aylan or gone missing. My experience, having worked in this area for many years, is that you very seldom meet people who want to be refugees. It is a desperate, awful, terrible existence. You leave home when the alternative is death. In the Levant and Mesopotamia, families are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. They are taking the deep blue sea, and taking their children with them.

In the face of such enormous suffering, that trolley of clothes and toys in Canterbury may seem trivial. But it tells a story about how churches, charities and individuals are answering the call of those who need our love and care, as we have done so many times in the past.

The people of these islands have a long and wonderful history of offering shelter – whether it be Huguenot Christians, Jewish refugees, Ugandan Asians, Vietnamese boat people or many, many others.

The Church of England, not always without controversy, has been at the forefront of calls for the UK to be just as generous again in welcoming refugees. We understand the complexity of the

situation can see public opinion shift from generous to fearful, and back again. Our best impulses clash with our deepest fears.

We know too that political leaders have a profoundly difficult task on their hands – both in gauging public opinion on this issue, and in formulating a response that is just and achievable.

As we urge the UK government to do all it can to help refugees, we recognise our major contribution to global aid. So far we are the only G7 country to honour its commitment to ring-fencing 0.7 per cent of gross national income for foreign aid.

So as Christians we’re not just raising our voices – we are doing what the church always does: putting the love of Christ into action. Those Calais-bound cars were just the beginning: there is so much more to be done.



Syrian refugees arrive at the Greek island of Lesbos

“They are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. They’re taking the deep blue sea, and taking their children with them”

Alongside other churches and faith communities, the Church of England is working closely with the government and local authorities to formulate a plan for resettling them. The families coming to us from Syria will be among the most vulnerable and traumatised people affected by this crisis.

Churches in the UK are also intensively involved with other community groups providing practical help and accommodation to refugees. Meanwhile, our Anglican sister churches in Europe are providing emergency relief in Greece, Serbia and Hungary.

All of this goes to the core of our faith as Christians. We’ve received such love from Jesus Christ (who as a child was himself a refugee) that we’re compelled to share it with others – particularly those who Jesus cared especially for: those cast to the margins of society. Our message is this: “Because Christ loved us, we love you.”

But even as we start to welcome those first refugees from the Syrian camps, there are still doubts and fears. Do we have room? Do we have the money? Will our communities fragment? Are we putting ourselves at risk? These questions are all valid and vital – they must be asked, and answered as best we can.

They also point to a deeper and perhaps more urgent question, however: as a country, do we have the emotional and spiritual capacity to welcome those who need our help in the months and years ahead?

I pray that we do have that capacity – the same capacity we’ve had for centuries when people have turned to us in crisis. It’s always been controversial at the time. It’s always been seen as too difficult. Yet each time we have risen to the challenge and benefitted from the gifts those coming to us bring.

This is a moment for all of us in the UK to demonstrate our shared humanity with those for whom daily life has become dominated by fear, violence and suffering.

Justin Welby is The Archbishop of Canterbury
@JustinWelby



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Hulme Library
opened in 1962
and was shut after
council cuts in 2011



THERE'S LIFE IN THESE OLD BUILDINGS

Our Fill 'Em Up campaign has shown the huge interest in bringing Britain's empty sites back into use. Adam Forrest reports on positive moves

When we launched our 'Fill 'Em Up' campaign in October, we called on councils to be more flexible in utilising their empty buildings. Boarding things up when people have the ideas and energy to use precious public space is a waste. Hundreds of readers have got in touch to tell us about empty buildings in their neighbourhood.

Manchester City Council is soon to open up two empty buildings – the former Hulme Library and the former Beech Mount children's home in Harpurhey – to be used as overnight shelters for rough sleepers this Christmas. It's great news. Perhaps council bosses are responding to the overwhelming support for Gary Neville allowing homeless men to use his future hotel, the former Stock Exchange (though they won't admit it, saying the plan has been worked on for "months").

Regardless of the motivations, the important thing is it's happening. The council now supports the principal of short-term use and has shown a willingness to work with groups supporting rough sleepers (in this case social housing landlord Riverside). "We have now identified the first pair... and we're continuing to carry out inspections so we can open more empty buildings in other parts of the city," says councillor Paul Andrews.

More good news: Stoke-on-Trent City Council is also opening boarded-up buildings to provide overnight accommodation for rough sleepers, having identified two suitable places so far. But others remain in the 'it's just too difficult' camp. According to Leicester council bosses, a proposal to offer empty council buildings to homeless people over Christmas just won't work. The refusal follows a petition set up by campaigner Nicola Deevey asking her local council to follow in Manchester and Stoke's footsteps.

One council member told the *Leicester Mercury* that rough sleepers have "issues". "A few faith groups have tried this kind of thing, opening up churches and community centres and letting people stay. But it didn't work." This is insulting to the faith groups and charities across the country who make "this kind of thing" work, year after year. They know better than anyone

that rough sleepers have "issues". That's the point.

The 'it's just too difficult' intransigence annoys people in the private sector too. Nicole Bremner, founder of property developers East Eight, got in touch to tell us about her plan to rent out empties on a short-term basis. Frustrated with jogging past boarded-up public baths and other empty buildings in east London, she has written to Hackney and Islington councils with a proposal.

If the council agreed to temporary residential zoning licences, Bremner's firm would be willing to repair and refurbish empty public buildings, then charge a "significantly discounted rent" to applicants in serious housing need with proven links to the area. "On numerous occasions I outlined the idea to their empty property teams but they just won't respond," Bremner says. "These buildings sit vacant, falling into worse condition, while planning decisions go on for years and years. We want to put something back, and if we're willing to do the conversion work I don't see why licences can't be granted to rent out to people in real need."

Local authorities remain firmly wedded to planning distinctions between residential and commercial zones: more imagination is needed to turn empty offices and shops into homes. Looming even larger over empty libraries, town halls and housing estates are potential development deals with the private sector. Regardless of the politics of each project, there remains an unfortunate and largely unnecessary fear: if you allow any form of social or discounted renting on a temporary basis, it will prove an almighty headache when you need to get people out and hand over the land or property.

We hope what's going on in Manchester and Stoke helps prove public buildings can be given life, even in the interim of moving from one state to another. We'll be back in January to examine what more can be done. **TBI**

Keep sending us your ideas for getting Britain's empty buildings back into use. Tweet @bigissue or email editorial@bigissue.com





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STREET ART



◀ SUPER TROOPER

BY DAVID HARDY

"I have been affected by homelessness twice in my seven years of living in London," says David. "My second experience with homelessness got me in St Mungo's hostel. I used the time there to paint as much as possible and also help with voluntary work with Street Souls, which also helps feed and clothe the homeless. I now paint full time and Street Souls opened a gallery called Artful Pelican. *Super Trooper* is an oil on canvas that sold recently. Thirty per cent of my art sales go to help the Artful Pelican and Street Souls."



I'M SORRY

BY RAPHAEL KELLETT

I say sorry to the snide official
His yapping bark is my poxy new life
It punctures my head like an evil knife
My brain is split and my tongue's a thistle.



I broke my promise, little by little
'Not on a work night, it's not
worth the strife'
But pint after pint like cheating my wife
Now hung-over I chew on hard gristle.

It's not a real job, I'm volunteering
The jobcentre's given me one last chance
Crush my spirit or scissor off my pay
Now the jobsworth is yapping and sneering
The sadistic twerp wants to see me dance
I hide behind a chair and crawl away.

"I am a 40-year-old poet being treated for mental illness and autism," says Raphael. "In the past I have slept rough following drug and alcohol addiction, as well as being unemployed. I have now been sober for 14 years and write acerbic poetry for relief. *I'm Sorry* reflects the comic yet tragic lifestyle I used to live."

▶ TOWER IN THE SKY

BY SHARRON GILBERT

Sharron is partially sighted and suffers from mental health issues. She creates artworks based on what she can see. "I love exploring shadows and shapes," she says. "I am fascinated by surrealism and Dali. I find similarities with Frida Kahlo's work. I enjoy photography too. I am a freelance artist and I sell my work for charity."



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You can buy prints of some artworks featured in Street Art through The Big Issue Shop. At least half of the profit from each sale goes to the artist. Order at shop.bigissue.com

Street Art is created by people who are marginalised by issues like homelessness, disability and mental health conditions. Contact streetlights@bigissue.com to see your art here.



VENDOR SUCCESSES

MASTER CHEF Ian Duff

Ian Duff, chef extraordinaire, combines selling The Big Issue in Bath with building his own fledgling catering business. Run as a social enterprise, Duff Cooks is aimed at providing work for other homeless people. And this year, 48-year-old Ian took on fellow Big Issue vendor Istvan Kakas to help with some of the cooking.

The pair worked on their first event together in September – a hen party at a rented townhouse in Bath. “It went great – Istvan is a larger than life character and a hard worker,” says Ian. “It’s what I wanted Duff Cooks to be all about – giving other people a chance to get back into the workplace.”

Ian – who organised Duff Cooks’ largest events yet in 2015 – hopes it can grow even bigger next year. “I’ve already got a few functions planned, and I’d like to give more vendors work,” he explains. “I’ve got to thank The Big Issue Foundation who have been brilliant ever since they helped me get set up with equipment. It’s going really well.” *DuffCooks.com*

CHARITY STAR Andrew McGarry

Andrew was sleeping rough and was down on his luck when he arrived in the Northamptonshire market town of Towcester. But his Big Issue customers were so helpful and generous – putting down a deposit for a bedsit room – he decided to throw himself into local fundraising efforts.

“I’ve done lots of work this year to raise money for the Hope Centre in Northampton and other local charities,” he explains. “I’ve organised jumble sales, barbecues, barn dances and best of all was the big concert at the church that raised £822. Next year I’ll try to organise a festival in Towcester. Who knows – maybe I’ll be on stage at the Royal Albert Hall in my tabard, raising even more money.”

GROWING THE FUTURE Janet Bowers

There’s nothing like learning on the job. Janet gained a Level 2 Customer Service NVQ at Bournemouth and Poole College this year while struggling with huge housing difficulties. She carried out the practical side of the course on her Big Issue sales pitch.

“I didn’t get any qualifications at school, so the NVQ felt like a real achievement,” she says. “I’m hoping it helps towards my husband and I starting a market garden business one day, selling



PAVING THE WAY

Our vendors made great strides forward in 2015. Here's to

“I organise fundraising events: jumble sales, BBQs, barn dances and concerts. Who knows, one day I might be on stage at the Royal Albert Hall in my tabard, raising even more money”

Andrew McGarry

fruit and vegetables and plants – that’s our long-term dream.”

Janet, 42, has endured a lot this year: her husband was in hospital with unstable angina. Janet had to keep working to support four children throughout his illness, all the while worrying about private landlords asking them to move at short notice. “Things are better now my husband is out of hospital,” she says. “It looks like we’ll have to move again in the New Year but hopefully we can find somewhere more settled in 2016.”

GIVING A HAND UP Bean Stocks

Bean sold the magazine in London for several years before becoming a vendor coordinator for The Big Issue. Then, in October, he moved on to a new role with



VENDOR SUCCESSES



“I want my new catering business, Duff Cooks, to be all about giving other people a chance to get back into the workplace”
Ian Duff

repaired relationships with other family members too. “It wasn’t a holiday – it was a pilgrimage,” says Mick. “I feel at peace now, knowing that I’ve got a family. We have all made a pact that we’ll never be torn apart again. We decided we’re going to meet up again next year, maybe even for Christmas if we can.”

CREATING OPPORTUNITY
Kevin Headley

Kevin, who sells the magazine in Hackney Wick, got a part-time role with Groundswell – a London charity. Kevin qualified as a homeless health peer advocate after six weeks of intensive training. “I’ve been through all levels of homelessness over 10 years – sofa surfing, hostels and sleeping rough, so hopefully I’m able to pass a lot on and help others as much as I can,” he says.

Kevin has been involved in fundraising work for The Big Issue Foundation, and also organised DJs and bands to perform at a food donation drive for homeless people at an east London cafe. “I’m selling the magazine in Europe’s arts heartland, so I know quite a lot of creative people. I like to keep active, and hopefully I’ll be doing more new things next year.”

OFFERING SUPPORT
Bryan Whiting

Yorkshire vendor Bryan Whiting experienced huge personal loss this year: his wife Karen lost her battle with cancer in July, at the age of 39. But the following month Bryan was out raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support. He shaved his hair, raising almost £100 for the charity. “She was the strongest woman I have ever had the pleasure of knowing,” says Bryan. “And I am a better person just for her being in my life.” **TBI**

AY TO SUCCESS

to them – and to the customers who make it all possible...

the charity London Pathway, providing specialist medical services to homeless people at University College Hospital.

As a care navigator, Bean works with homeless people admitted to hospital, trying to work with them on short-term plans. “I try to help them out with whatever kind of help they most need,” he explains. “Having been through homelessness myself, we’re experts by experience. It’s challenging, because people get into really difficult situations, but I’m really, really enjoying the work.”

SWEET SUCCESS
Michael Hadley

Hard-working vendor Michael has earned one of the most unusual pitches in the country – one day a week he sells indoors, at Cadbury HQ in the suburbs of

Birmingham. Michael, 25, is taking part in a corporate placement scheme organised by The Big Issue Foundation, which sees him selling the magazine to Mondelez staff next door to Cadbury World, while also gaining skills training. “It’s been great,” he says. “A different environment means different sales techniques. Sales is what I seem to be good at, and I’m hoping this placement will lead to more work opportunities next year.”

FAMILY REUNION
Mick Dillon

Sometimes moving forward involves looking back and repairing old wounds. Birmingham vendor Mick, 52, made a huge breakthrough this year when he was reunited with his mum in Tenerife, after 27 years apart. The trip to Spain to reconnect means Mick has

The Big Issue Foundation – the charity arm of The Big Issue – works with vendors to help them move out of homelessness. Find out more at bigissue.org.uk and turn to page 52.



STAR WARS

HOW DO JEDI CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

Steven MacKenzie feels the Force, in his quest
to discover the religious root of Star Wars





STAR WARS



ur Vader who art in heaven... Cinema chains recently provoked outrage when they banned an advert made by the Church of England (CoE). The clip in question contained various people reciting lines from the Lord's Prayer, including

Big Issue columnist Justin Welby, which the church hoped to screen ahead of the new Star Wars film.

"The prospect of a multi-generational cultural event offered by *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* was too good an opportunity to miss and we are bewildered by the decision of the cinemas," said the CoE's director of communications, Reverend Arun Arora.

Digital City Media, which handles advertising for Cineworld, Odeon and Vue, claimed that they reject all political or religious ads on the basis that "some – unintentionally or otherwise – could cause offence to those of differing political persuasions, as well as to those of differing faiths and indeed of no faith".

Princess Leia herself, Carrie Fisher, thought it was crazy that people could have been offended, saying they should instead "get a life", while a comment on the matter was even squeezed out of our own Prime Minister, who declared the whole situation as being "ridiculous".

David Cameron has a point – if cinemas want to shy away from political or religious content, they should stay well clear of Star Wars. "The films are absolutely political and religious, and have their origins in very specific political and religious questions," says Chris Taylor, deputy editor of the tech news site *Mashable*, whose book explains *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*. "Politically speaking, it was a reaction to the Vietnam War – the Empire represents the US military, the rebels represent the Vietcong – but because it is clothed in space fantasy, with World War Two-style costuming, nobody noticed. Certainly the Americans didn't notice the very subversive, left-wing political concept behind it all.

"As for the religious concept, the Force is all religions boiled down to the most simple concept that George Lucas could create."

In the original film, Obi Wan Kenobi tells Luke Skywalker: "The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us, penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together."

Those 28 words, which Alec Guinness delivers as if their corniness is a low point in his career, became the foundation that the entire mythology of the Star Wars universe is built upon.

"I don't think George Lucas gets enough credit for coming up with the concept," Taylor says. "Wars of religion have been fought for centuries to try to get to something like this, an ultimate description of religion – just a basic ethereal notion that there's something else out there."

So what are the origins of the Force? George Lucas' first film, *THX 1138*, set in an emotionless future, contained a scene referring to a "force" that did not make the final cut. This in turn was an echo of an influential, if seldom seen, Canadian short called *21-87* (as a nod to the film, Princess Leia's prison cell on the Death Star is number 2187). Over disconnected footage in *21-87*, a voice speaks: "Many people feel that in the contemplation of nature and in communication with

other living things, they become aware of some kind of force."

From an early age Lucas had questioned his religious upbringing. "He was raised a Methodist, mostly by his housekeeper, Tilly," Taylor says. "He asked his mother at 10 years old, 'Why are there so many religions but only one God?' So he was obviously quite precocious in his religious thinking."

Perhaps Lucas' greatest achievement is to come up with a science-fiction based spirituality but not end up becoming like Scientology's founder L Ron Hubbard, despite the fact that fellow film director Francis Ford Coppola had suggested they start their own religion.

"Coppola often had his tongue in his cheek but as Lucas often said, Francis is the kind of guy to find a parade and then jump out in front of it," says Taylor. "If Lucas had said, 'That's not a bad idea', Coppola would have been all over it and there would be real Jedi temples right now."

Well, speaking of temples, one of the many churches that has sprung up from the Star Wars saga is the Temple of the Jedi Order. I dropped them an email and the mysterious Akkarin responded, saying he would be delighted to talk to *The Big Issue*. I am not sure what planet he comes from but wherever it is, the locals speak with an apologetically posh English accent.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A JEDI?

"A Jedi is someone who pursues what is most meaningful for themselves within a broader context of recognising how other people also find meaning in other things," answers Akkarin.

Following a religion derived from a science fiction film seems ludicrous but according to official statistics, there are more Jedi in the UK than any other country – certainly in this part of the galaxy. In the 2001 census more people identified themselves as Jedi than Jewish in Britain. It was listed as our fourth largest religion, ahead of Buddhism and Sikhism. The total number (suspiciously concentrated in university towns such as Brighton, Cambridge and Oxford) was 390,127 – or 0.8 per cent of the population in England and Wales. In Scotland the figure was only 0.3 per cent, however a Freedom of Information Request in 2009 revealed that eight police officers from the Strathclyde force had entered Jedi in their diversity forms.

By the 2011 census, numbers of Jedi had declined by more than half but those numbers could climb again given the reawakening interest in all things Star Wars. While the vast majority of recorded Jedi were demonstrating that they did not take the census very seriously, a number of people like Akkarin take the messages from the films to heart and live by that philosophy.

"I don't know of any Jedi who actually believes Star Wars is literally true," Akkarin points out.

"At the Temple of the Jedi Order we base our interpretation of Jediism not so much on the films but on the inspirations George Lucas drew upon. It has its Christian backgrounds but a lot of the >



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children's lives this Christmas?**

**So will you send a gift today
and help save even more lives?**

giftaid it

*Donations made to the Christmas appeal between 6 November 2015 and 5 February 2016 will be matched up to £5 million.



STAR WARS

ideas are inspired by Eastern religions such as Buddhism, in particular Zen and Daoism."

STAR WARS AND A SENSE OF BELONGING

Is the Force just another word for faith? "A connection between people is a good way of describing it. At the Temple we don't offer a very strict definition of the Force, we leave it broad to allow people their own interpretation," says Akkarin.

The Temple's doctrine was originally adapted from a humanist website. Akkarin is keen to point out one of their teachings: "Jedi believe in the ethic of reciprocity, and how moral concepts are not absolute but vary by culture, religion and over time.

"If anything, the worst thing about the films is..."
Jar Jar Binks?

"Okay, the second worst thing about the films is the very black and white distinction between good and evil. That does not exist in the real world. I'm not going to call out other Jedi churches but some of them do have a stronger focus on being on the light side or the dark side."

Other Jedi denominations include the Jedi Church and the Church of the Jedi but Akkarin was attracted to the Temple's humanist doctrine. "I looked at it and went okay, this all sort of makes sense. Most people have the same kind of reaction. The Temple seemed like a place I could belong."

The sense of belonging is important. Somebody who followed the spiritual philosophy of Star Wars may have been the victim of general mocking before the internet allowed those with similar views to connect and form communities. The Star Wars special editions were released in 1997, just as the world wide web was taking off. The forums fans formed to debate the unwelcome excess of CGI have evolved into networks that can debate more serious subjects, as well as speculation about the storyline of *Star Wars VII*.

Simon Brew, who founded the entertainment news site Den of Geek, has used their reach to tackle issues beyond its pop culture news remit. "After the suicide of Robin Williams I cancelled our lead feature and just put a post about what you could do if you're feeling depressed," Brew says. "I'd never seen a response like it. We followed it up last Christmas, putting a letter to readers about being lonely at that time of year. Again, the response... I know it sounds mawkish but I had to wipe tears out of my eyes reading the comments."

Brew subsequently launched a Geeks Vs Loneliness campaign, publishing a post every Friday dealing with issues such as depression, bullying and anxiety. "We've kept it simple," he says. "We worked out you don't need fireworks and klaxons. It's not a magic wand, sometimes you just need to be there."

Apart from the advice found in the columns, readers leave comments offering mutual support. With Christmas being a time many people can feel



especially isolated, Brew is planning to spread the message via a viral video, hoping to get figures from the world of geek such as Neil Gaiman and Brian Cox to recite lines from *It Feels Like Christmas*, a song from the festive masterpiece, *The Muppet Christmas Carol*.

"We know that 20,000 people read the letter last Christmas," Brew says. "You come in for a bit of Star Wars then you see a post that might apply to you. Sometimes people seek out stuff when they're nearer the end of their tether than the start. Community bothers me more than finding more readers, if people can feel they have a virtual safe space."

Obviously every Star Wars fan is getting what they have long wished for this Christmas, a brand new film. But apart from that, how do Jedi celebrate Christmas?

"Most people would do what every other family would do even though they're Jedi," Akkarin says. They might just get more Star Wars toys too? "Quite possibly. Interestingly, in 2005 when we filed to become a company, the papers were

submitted a few days before Christmas and we actually became officially recognised as a church on Christmas Day. On special days, like the anniversary day, we might hold a ceremony where you can sit down in front of your computer and be part of a live service."

Despite the Temple's origins being in science fiction, Akkarin emphasises that Jedi are humans like the rest of us. So who is he exactly?

"I am a student at Canterbury University," says Akkarin, real name Michael Kitchen. "I'm 23 and I also have a part-time job as a sales assistant."

What are you studying?

"Religious studies with philosophy."

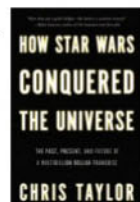
Do your classmates know you are a Jedi?

"Not really. I tend not to bring it up. It's the sort of thing that could prove problematic."

But from his description of Jediism, the Temple's doctrine and Lucas' liberal ideology, it seems many of us could be Jedi, we just don't know it.

"May the Force be with you," Kitchen says, signing off. "That is something we did adopt from the films." **TB**

We have five copies of Chris Taylor's book *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe* to give away. Simply email JEDI@competitions@bigissue.com. Full T&Cs online. To learn more about Jediism visit templeofthediorder.org (or see the new Star Wars film from Dec 17).



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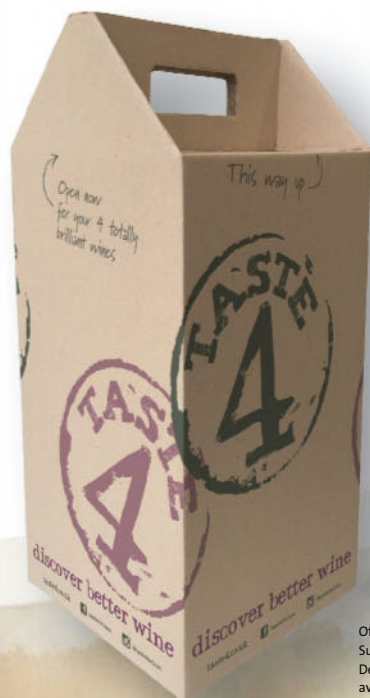
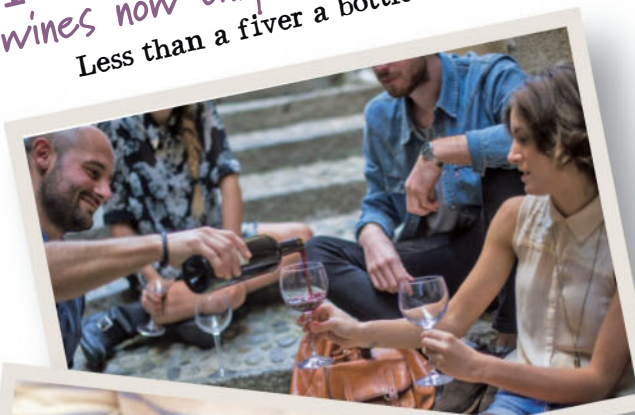
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DIG OUT THE NUGGETS OF KNOWLEDGE

John Lloyd is a radio and TV producer. He started *The News Quiz*, *To the Manor Born*, *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, *Spitting Image* and *Blackadder*, and presents *The Museum of Curiosity on Radio 4*. For the past 15 years he has been completely absorbed in *QI*, the project he founded in the late 1990s.

The core idea of *QI* is that everything in the universe, without exception, is quite interesting – if looked at closely enough, for long enough, or from the right angle.

One of the most interesting things about the universe is that it often doesn't look that way. It frequently presents itself as frightening, confusing and, in some ways worst of all, boring. To paraphrase Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Men and women are born curious, but everywhere they are bored stiff'.

Why? The universe considered even for a moment is flabbergasting – in its enormity, its complexity, its beauty – and all you need to do to be blown away by it is pay close attention. That's what we do at *QI*. We are information miners, fact geologists. We venture out into the deserts of dullness and look for promising outcrops. Then we dig and dig and dig, throwing away thousands of tons of useless rubble for every gleaming gem of interestingness we uncover.

The next series of *QI* is all about the letter N and, about this time of year, with our books in the shops and the series edited and rolling out on air, I sometimes have a little time to do pure *QI* research – which is all I really want to do in life and is one of the reasons I started the company.

A particular pleasure of *QI* research is taking a subject about which you know absolutely nothing – especially a subject you've never even heard of – and trying to fill in the blank, as it were. Here are a few truly obscure pieces of N-related information:

- Thomas Nabbes (1605–41) was considered a third-rate writer in his lifetime. In 2013, his play *The Unfortunate Mother* (1640) finally received its world premiere – 373 years after it was written.
- There are no dry-cleaners in Nauru. The President sends his trousers to be dry-cleaned in Melbourne, almost 3,000 miles away.

- The reign of King Nabopolassar in Babylon is distinguished by the first recorded use of asphalt as a road-building material around 625 BC.
- Napoleon Cybulski (1854–1919) was the Polish physiologist who first isolated adrenaline in 1895.
- Noël Coward's father was a piano salesman.
- There are two Noahs in the Bible. The other one's a woman. She appears in the Book of Numbers as one of the five daughters of Zelophehad. Her sisters are called Mahlah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. This list is the largest cluster of female names anywhere in the Bible.

What is the point of knowing these things? When Heinrich Hertz first discovered radio waves (so called because they 'radiated'), he was asked a similar question – what are they for? "I don't know," he said, "but I expect somebody will find a use for them". At *QI*, we find all sorts of uses for the nuggets we dig up – questions for the TV show, books, radio, podcasts and tweets – but the real point of *QI* research is that it is autotelic. It's one of my favourite words in English and it means 'worth doing for its own sake'.

'Names' is a big N subject. Names of shops in Ghana, where more than 70 per cent of the population are Christian, include Blood of Jesus Fast Foods, Invite Jesus Into Your Life Fashion Centre, The Rod of Moses Welding Shop, My Lord is Able Bakery, To God Be the Glory Egg Shop, Divine Intervention Gas Ltd, Jesus Won the Battle Cigarettes, God Gives and Forgives American Auto Parts and Not Ready Yet Garage.


Then there's Novelists. Not many novelists' names begin with N, as it happens – Anaïs Nin, Vladimir Nabokov and VS Naipaul are three that spring to mind but many, many more well-known ones begin with A, B, C or D.

Towards the end of his life the novelist Max Beerbohm found himself unable to go into bookshops because the combined weight of the defeated ambitions of the thousands of different authors was too much to bear.

Brendan Behan became an alcoholic at the age of eight. Pasternak is Russian for 'parsnip'. Laurence Sterne's wife thought she was the Queen of Bohemia. Anthony Trollope invented the post-box. George Orwell ran the village shop in Wallington, Hertfordshire and had a pet goat called Muriel.

And finally, my favourite N fact I've found so far: The Niger National Museum in Niamey, the capital of Niger, contains a sculpture representing the Tree of Ténéré, an acacia that grew in the Sahara and was for many decades the most isolated tree on earth. The next nearest tree was over 250 miles (400 km) away.

In 1973 a drunken Libyan truck driver improbably crashed into it and knocked it down.

Have a quite interesting Christmas – and drive carefully... 

QI's latest books, *1,234 QI Facts to Leave You Speechless* (Faber & Faber, £10.99) and *The Third QI Book of General Ignorance* (Faber & Faber, £14.99), are out now

'CHRISTMAS? IT'S BUBLÉ AND TRYING NOT TO EAT TOO MUCH'

James Corden has had quite a year. From nowhere he broke big in America and is fielding duet requests from Kylie. Adrian Lobb catches up with the whirlwind

James Corden is in his office in Los Angeles. And he's full of the joys of the season. "I'm listening to Christmas music," he hollers. "It is December 1 – time to get Bublé on!"

The 37-year-old has more reason than most to celebrate. In the past year he has moved to LA with his wife Julia and their children Max, four, and Carey, one. He has taken over as presenter of *The Late Late Show* on CBS and been presented with an OBE by Princess Anne. Then there's the cameo Alan Bennett wrote for him in *The Lady in the Van*, plus a role alongside Nicholas Hoult in *Kill Your Friends*. Now he's even released a Christmas single with Kylie Minogue. Phew!

So, we have to ask, James, looking at your achievements this year: where did it all go wrong?

All I've ever wanted – a career that is varied. I love acting and I love writing. When Ruth Jones and I started writing *Gavin and Stacey* while I was doing a play called *The History Boys*, it was because I wanted an element of control over my career. But I never thought I would be a fucking chat show host in America. This is a culmination of all those things. I get to sing a bit, dance a bit, act a bit, write a bit. And the show has been a hit. It is a huge relief. But if you sit and go, 'Look how well we are doing' you start to think you are more of a dude than you really are. I realise now how stupid it was to just take someone completely unknown in the US and expect it to work. So I am beyond thrilled by the response.

Was the build-up to *The Late Late Show* nerve-racking? It was terrifying. We had to get it together in 10 weeks and there were three of us on staff. There are 90 now. I felt very nervous but was aware that, good or bad, this would be a defining moment in my life. A chapter: 'And then I went to America and it didn't work so I came back'. I made peace with it. I wouldn't be the last person to try to come here and fail. In my head I played out what that would feel like so many times.

Was it tough to up sticks with a young family?

For my wife to make this move when our daughter was five weeks old is incredible. I will always be indebted. We just went for it. I don't know if we will live here forever. We are a long way from grandparents, aunties, uncles and friends. It is tough. But I am home much more than if I was making a film. I feel very conscious that my children are only going to be young once. And, as far as I can tell, no one ends up on a therapist's

chair saying: "My dad was around too much giving me too many cuddles."

What do you miss from home? I really miss the architecture of the UK. Which is something I never thought I would say. In London, Leeds or Liverpool you are always rewarded if you look up. You will see a beautiful building. In north London we had a great thing I now realise I took for granted. We could just go out and find our day. Leave the house, potter around, pop in for food. It is all on your doorstep, that element of spontaneity. But LA is like a vast series of disparate towns. Everywhere is a destination. You get in your car.

You are spending lots of time in your car, with various stars for your show's Carpool Karaoke skits.

It is ridiculous to find yourself in a car singing along with Stevie Wonder. It is insane that this could be my life. No one wanted to do Carpool Karaoke until I played a tape of me singing in a car with George Michael to someone from Mariah Carey's label. Mariah is a huge fan of his, so she agreed to do it. I feel very lucky. Rehearsing the bits where we recount a person's film career, spending an afternoon with Tom Hanks or Matt Damon, is also incredible. Doing an original sketch with Mel Brooks was a highlight.

These things are very, very lovely. You don't ever think that you would be in the presence of those people.

And you got Justin Bieber – so are you a Belieber?

Totally! I always was, I always will be. Yes. Absolutely.

You initially found fame hard, didn't you? It is a big adjustment when those first flushes of fame come around. You can get a bit lost. I had broken up a long relationship and was going out all the time. But I was only ever going out to find someone to stay in with. If you always hoped success would come but were told those things don't happen to people like you, it's easy to think – I should enjoy this while it is here. But you can either be really good at going out or try to be good at your work. I am lucky. I come from a good family and all manner of people were saying: "What are you doing?" But you only learn by going through it.

You have recorded a Christmas single with Kylie.

Another unlikely event. So here is another ridiculous story: Kylie Minogue emailed me out of the blue and asked if I wanted to sing a Christmas duet on her album. Of course I did! We talked about songs, I sent her Only You by Yazoo and she loved it. I recorded my



Stevie Wonder does Carpool Karaoke with James Corden



bit here, she sang her bit in London, and you know what? I really like it.

Are you picking up the accent and Americanisms?

My big worry is for my daughter. I worry she is not going to know life in Britain. It will just be a place we come to in winter where she is going to be, 'Oh my god, why is it so cold? Grandma and granddad don't even have a pool, this is disgusting'. I really hope that doesn't happen. My wife is speaking posher and posher around the house to try to keep them British. That said, I've been to a couple of basketball games. I might support the Lakers but they're terrible. And while the Premier League is on my television, there's no competition.

So you keep up to date with the important stuff – politics, football, telly?

Oh yes. I don't miss a beat. I haven't missed a minute of *TFI Friday* since I've been here. I love it. When does this interview come out? Okay, I can say I am doing *TFI Friday* at Christmas. I spent my whole childhood wanting to walk through that crowd to The Riverboat Song. It was a dream of mine.

Other than that, are you lost to British audiences for now?

No way. I will always come back to do *A League*

of Their Own. But I will be doing *The Late Late Show* for five years. By then I will be 40, which seems a good time to take stock. I was going to write a new narrative show for HBO this year. And that is a story I would still rather like to tell. All I ever wanted was to write a sitcom for the BBC and do a show in the West End. The two times I have worked at the National Theatre, my life has been enriched. So I would never forgive myself if I didn't do another play with Nicholas Hytner. Any day with him and Alan Bennett is a great day. Alan wrote parts for the eight original History Boys in *The Lady in the Van*, which was a joy.

You get a break over Christmas. What are your plans? More Bubl  and trying not to eat too much. Then I'll start the diet on January 1, as has been the way for the last 12 years.

Merry Christmas from The Big Issue, James...

And to you. Thank you for putting me in your brilliant magazine. I consider it a huge honour, I truly do. I am touched and humbled. **TBI**

A League of Their Own returns on January 7 to Sky 1

SHERLOCK IS LIKE BEATLEMANIA

Amanda Abbington raises a glass to the frenzy around Britain's biggest TV show. Interview: **Adrian Lobb**

On New Year's Day, *Sherlock* – the most watched British television drama series since modern viewing figure records began (in 2001) – returns, and 20 per cent of the UK population will tune in. For one night only, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, brought into the modern day in 2010 by Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman, will step back in time to the Victorian era of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novels.

According to Amanda Abbington, who plays Mary, the mysterious ex-assassin who took aim at John Watson's heart, viewers will be dazzled.

"The fact that we were doing a Christmas special was already exciting. I had never done one before. When Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat [co-creators of the *Sherlock* reboot] told us the premise, we were all blown away," she says. "We are going back to Conan Doyle's vision. There is a darkness to his stories. I'm fascinated by the history of that time, those extremes of poverty and wealth. So I love that we have done a one-off in the original format."

Since joining the cast in 2013, Abbington has had a close-up view of the intensity around the show's stars, Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman (her real-life partner since 2000). Obsessive fans attend every location shoot.

"The people who come to watch us filming are sweethearts – 99 per cent are well behaved and lovely," she says. "They are often really young girls, and they sit silently for hours to watch how it is filmed. We go over and talk with them and they get excited. When Martin and Ben talk with them – I hesitate to compare it to Beatlemania but there is that fanatical element."

The importance of the show to this younger female audience is something Abbington takes very seriously.

"I am fully aware that there are young, vulnerable girls that watch the show. I know what that is like because I was young and vulnerable once. I was bullied a lot as a kid. So when young girls come to me and say they are having trouble at home, or being bullied at school, a few words of encouragement can go a long

way to making them feel less alone." In recent years Abbington's profile has increased thanks to her role as Miss Mardle in *Mr Selfridge*, which returns in the new year, starring opposite Jason Isaacs in *Case Histories* and, most recently, playing a central character in the pre-watershed police show *Cuffs*.

"The other day a police officer in London wound down his window and said, 'Excuse me madam, I just wanted to tell you we are loving *Cuffs* and all the boys at the station say it is incredibly accurate'. You can't get bigger validation than that!"

With bigger and better roles comes more pressure. Abbington talks passionately about her desire to keep her children out of the limelight – something her Twitter followers help to police. She has had years to adapt but others – in particular Benedict Cumberbatch – had 'Beatlemania' status thrust upon them. *Sherlock* propelled him from respected actor to globally beloved megastar and pin-up, and major life events – marriage and fatherhood – have intensified pressure in the last 12 months.

"To do all that in such a short space of time must be incredibly overwhelming. Martin and I did it over 15 years. We were together for a long time before having children," she says. "I spoke to Ben at the *Hamlet* first night, and it was lovely. He is over the moon that he has a little boy. He is riding that wave of being a famous actor and loving every minute of it. And why

wouldn't you? But he is very private.

"You have to try to keep an amount of anonymity and not parade your children around. It is not our kids' fault their parents are actors. We try to keep ours out of the limelight, and I have no doubt that Ben will do the same with Christopher."

During the 2015 election campaign, Freeman made a campaign video for the Labour Party and Abbington spoke out in support. The reaction was intense.

"Martin particularly stuck his head above the parapet and we got shot down in flames. It was like a witch hunt, how much more stuff can you throw at us?" she recalls. "He was very badly burnt by that. I don't know how politicians do it. So we quietly champion now because that side of it isn't worth getting shit for, it really isn't. But I thought what he did was



Real-life partners Martin Freeman and Amanda Abbington get married in *Sherlock*



brilliant, he was very honest about what he believes. I like what Jeremy Corbyn stands for, I like that he wants to help people. Martin said to me the other day, 'You are one of the few people I know who gets more militant as they get older'."

After a quiet Christmas, Abbington plans to take a few months out to be at home. She talks about being a "music nut", passing on the love of music she inherited from her father to her children.

"We have a very big wall of vinyl that we get out and dance around with the kids. We had music in our house from when I was tiny. Now we try to school our kids in what is good," she says. The Unthanks and Larkin Poe are current favourites.

"At some point I have to take my daughter to see Taylor Swift. It is so sweet, her first dip into someone she really likes. It is really cool seeing someone very

young being a fan of somebody. And I'm very glad it's Taylor Swift because I think she is decent, a force for good."

In the new year Abbington will complete work on *Another Mother's Son*, a film set in Nazi-occupied Jersey, and is in discussion about a four-part BBC comedy. First, though, she will join up with the *Sherlock* gang – including their hardcore fans – to film three more feature-length episodes, starting in April.

"Steven Moffat says it is all going to hell, which sounds great to me," she says. "I can't wait. I know what is going to happen. I know what a rollercoaster it is and how dark it is going to get. They have done it again. *Sherlock* fans are going to absolutely love it." **TBI**

Sherlock: The Abominable Bride airs New Year's Day at 9pm on BBC One

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A *party* TONIGHT...

Keen to impress but not sure how? Allow our, ahem, expert panel talk you through food and festivities...

HOW TO KEEP GUESTS BUSY

MYANNA BURING, *RIPPER STREET* STAR

When I was growing up, my family didn't do big, lavish presents. We found gifts for about 20p, wrapped them up and wrote riddles on them to make them exciting. I find it a bit odd there's pressure to buy things when it should be about what we do and being together with loved ones. It's not just family. We'd have an open house where anybody that didn't have anywhere to go for Christmas could come round. Everyone would sit together and there would be people making gingerbread biscuits, people making decorations to add to the tree, others making mulled wine. After a while the teams would switch so they would have a go at everything. At one of the stations, you make pomanders, sticking cloves in patterns on oranges. The way they look, the way they smell... If you've got nothing else for Christmas, just grab an orange, stick some cloves in it – you'll smell Christmas.

Myanna Buring stars in *The Wasp* at Trafalgar Studios until January 16

HOW TO WIN AT SCRABBLE

MARTIN LEWIS, *MONEY SAVING SCRABBLE* GURU

First of all, work out if there is a seven-letter word that can go on the board. Then look at the board and see where you want to play letters that would score you the most. Find your highest scoring letters and build the word around that. Top for score-ability if you want a seven-letter professional word is 'STAINER'. If you aim to have that combination of letters – even if you've one missing – in nearly every case you will be able to make that with what's in your rack. If you build yourself a 'STAINER' in the background while you're getting rid of other letters, you'll get a good score. But don't be a bad loser. It would be horrendous etiquette to go in a huff and upset the board if you're losing. I wouldn't play with such a Scrabble churl.

The *Martin Lewis Money Show* airs Mondays at 8pm on ITV

HOW TO TOAST PROPERLY

STEVEN TOAST, OF *TOAST OF LONDON*

My most memorable Christmas Day speech was very dramatic; after I ended up as one of several hostages captured by a gang of jewel thieves during the aftermath of a botched robbery in the King's Road. Taken to a disused warehouse as we awaited eventual rescue by the police (thankfully, common sense prevailed and a shoot-out was averted), one of the villains prevailed upon me to recite a section of a Jacob Marley speech in *A Christmas Carol*. Allowing for the unusual circumstances, I was happy enough with my rendition, and my tips for an after-dinner Christmas Day speech would be based on this experience: don't go on for too long, keep swearing to a minimum, and try not to offend anybody in the room – especially if they're pointing a gun at you.

Steven Toast's memoir/acting guide, *Toast on Toast: Cautionary Tales and Candid Advice*, is out now (Canongate, £14.99)





CHRISTMAS TIPS



DON'T SEND CHRISTMAS CARDS

EDDIE REDMAYNE,
OSCAR-WINNING SUPERSTAR

I'm not nearly organised enough as a human being to keep a Christmas card list. I feel like the second you start one you can never stop, and you're perpetually causing offence to people – if you ever forget to send one and you did the year before. Although as a kid I used to love making Christmas cards, with a bit of Pritt Stick and glitter. It was probably my favourite time of the year.

Eddie Redmayne stars in *The Danish Girl*, in cinemas from January 1

HOW TO BE A MASTERCHEF ON CHRISTMAS DAY

SUPERCHEF JOHN TORODE

Do things way in advance. I remember four o'clock in the afternoon, every Christmas Eve with my grandmother, all of us kids would be standing around peeling vegetables. They were always peeled well before dinnertime on Christmas Eve and left in bowls of water. Christmas morning was very easy. All the stuff would go in the oven and we'd go to church.

If you're cooking for lots of people, ask everyone to bring something. I don't believe it should be all on the host to do all of the work, and give up their home, and do the table setting, and do all the washing up. If Auntie Joyce makes really good stuffing, ask her to bring it. If Bert makes brilliant custard and Yorkshire puddings, ask Bert to bring that. You do the main bit and ask everybody else to bring some stuff.

I make very, very good stuffing and I give it to a number of people as their Christmas present – a big dish with a bow around the outside, and they love it! At Christmas time we buy a lot of presents for people but how many do they really want and how many do they really use?

The old socks and jocks thing – underpants are jocks in Australia – they're useful. I like a pair of socks, maybe I'm just old but you've got to have the practical things.

MasterChef returns in the new year on BBC One

HOW TO BE THE PERFECT HOST

MARK 'THE HOTEL' JENKINS

I've celebrated more than 250 Christmases. They weren't all real Christmases – I'm not that old! In the hotel trade I used to take a lot of coach parties offseason. Our Christmas started in the middle of October and I would have Christmas Day twice a week every Tuesday and Saturday.

The perfect host anticipates their guests' needs before they know they've got them themselves. Faffing around and making sure they come first – I think that's relevant if you just have friends come over. Christmas is a bit like a wedding – it is that important. The dinner cannot go wrong.

One of the supermarkets this year is selling vol-au-vents, which are traditionally round, in the shape of a Christmas tree. That to me is absolutely perfect. The other main tip I have for nibbles... when you have sausages or cheese and pineapple on sticks, don't use sticks, use Twiglets. It's much safer because you haven't got sharp, pointy bits of wood everywhere, and it's delicious because you eat the stick as well!

The World According to Manager Mark is out now (John Blake Publishing, £8.99). He is running Christmas Party Nights throughout January. partynighttickets.com



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At the heart of it all is River Cottage HQ, situated on the Devon and Dorset border, which is home to everything Hugh and his team do, and is the base for River Cottage Cookery and Chefs' School, unique dining experiences and memorable events.

Farther afield there are also four Canteens, award-winning restaurants and delis based in the South West, combining the River Cottage philosophy with the finest producers in Axminster, Bristol, Plymouth and Winchester.

Hugh says: "It's our greatest delight to share our passion for food integrity and consumption of local, seasonal produce with tens of thousands of people every year."

You can find out all about River Cottage here: rivercottage.net

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KEYWORD RIVER COTTAGE

Terms & Conditions: the prize is for a pair of tickets for a one-day cookery course at River Cottage HQ, to be used by April 2016. Dates are subject to availability. Travel and accommodation are not included in the prize, details of local B&Bs and hotels can be found on the River Cottage website, along with course dates.

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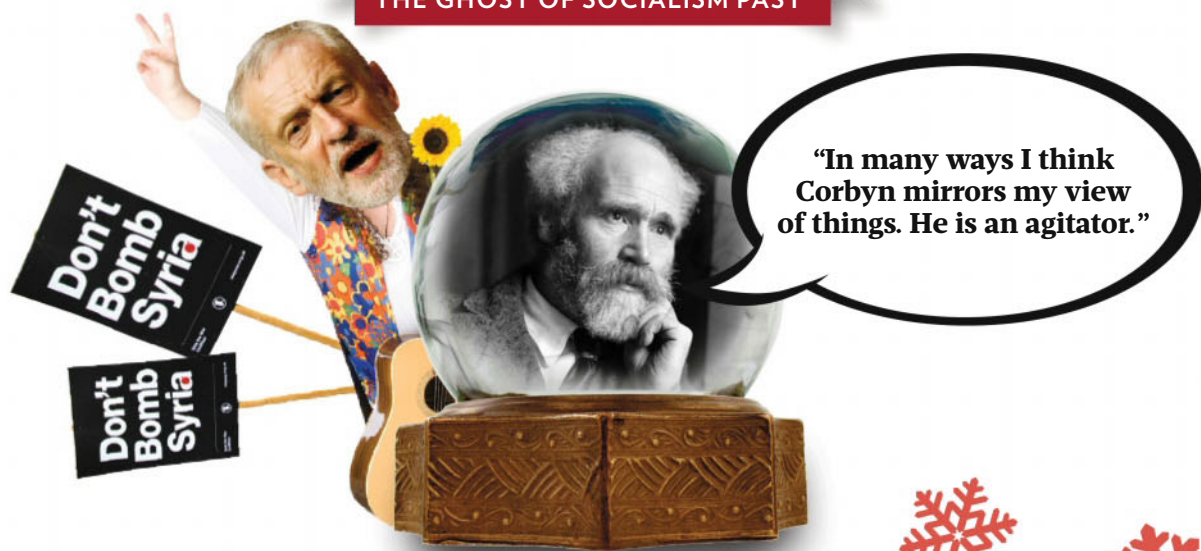
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CORBYNMANIA – WHAT KEIR HARDIE REALLY THINKS!

Jeremy Corbyn's accession to Labour leader was the seismic political shocker of 2015, shaking the corridors of power to their foundations with his old-skool Lefty leanings, sartorially dubious cap and donkey jacket, and inconveniently fair-minded invocations of Keir Hardie's founding principles of the Labour movement. Thanks to Corbynmania, Hardie hasn't been this hot – nor has Labour ruffled this many feathers – since the start of the last century.

A strident Ayrshire socialist, a miner and firebrand union activist, a suffragist and pacifist who opposed the First World War, Hardie was the Don Daddy of the left in Westminster and founder of the Independent Labour Party in 1893. In his spare time he was also a keen spiritualist who attempted to communicate with the dead and attended seances – and after his death in 1915, Hardie dropped into a few from the Other Side. The media reported that at least twice Hardie came through from beyond the veil to deliver messages of guidance to Labour.

Having bagged the biggest exclusive interviews of 2015 – the Dalai Lama, the Pope, Prince William – we decided that there was just one man left we needed to hear from. So The Big Issue contacted spiritualist Philip Solomon, who offered his services as a bridge to the spirit side to see if Keir Hardie had anything to say about the man proclaimed as his political spiritual heir.

Our psychic guide made it clear there would be no guarantee of success. But with his name being bandied around so much these last few months it seems Hardie had plenty to say on Corbyn, Miliband, Labour and Britain's military involvement in the Middle East. This is a verbatim report of that exchange. Mr Corbyn, are you listening? Knock twice for yes...

Solomon: What do you think of the present Labour Party? Do you think they have returned to some of the principles you would believe in under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership?

Hardie: In many ways I think Corbyn mirrors my

views of things, I would certainly see him as a person who speaks honestly and strongly and follows what would have been my leads too. He is a good public speaker and draws large crowds. When I was in the body, that was my great strength. Of course, today (and we are aware of and watch your world) I would probably be using things like the internet and Facebook but nothing agitates and gets a people ready for change more than good public speaking. Corbyn is an agitator, Miliband was neither radical or able to present something entirely different to the Conservative package.

I like Corbyn's efforts to bring back strong links with the unions. The trouble with the Labour Party is that for many years it almost became secondary or very similar to the Conservative Party. But there again it always was a bit of a mix of social democrats and socialists. 'Tis a funny lot in many ways. One half, I think, always looking towards slowly changing things, the other half wanting to fight and change injustice and suffering immediately. Not easy, Philip! [Laughs and chuckles]. One thing I will say, though, I don't think Corbyn and his supporters will be involved in doing deals and saying one thing and doing another. I would be like that if I was with you today but in honesty I don't think Corbyn is destined to be a prime minister or a great leader. I don't think I would be either, to be honest, the world today is a different one to mine. But I think I would offer a very different way forward for the people that would be a totally different package to that which the Conservatives present – and I must say, Jeremy is doing the same, isn't he?

Solomon: Thank you. What do you think of the world today, civil rights and all the wars that seem to be going on in the Middle East – terrorism, etc?

Hardie: I was always opposed to war. I opposed the First World War, it caused mass death and broke the economy of Europe. If I had been around in your times, I would have been opposed to the war in Iraq. I saw that as driven by capitalism and greed, not a wish to free and help in the way it was projected, and is the cause of many of the world's problems you face today. **TBI**

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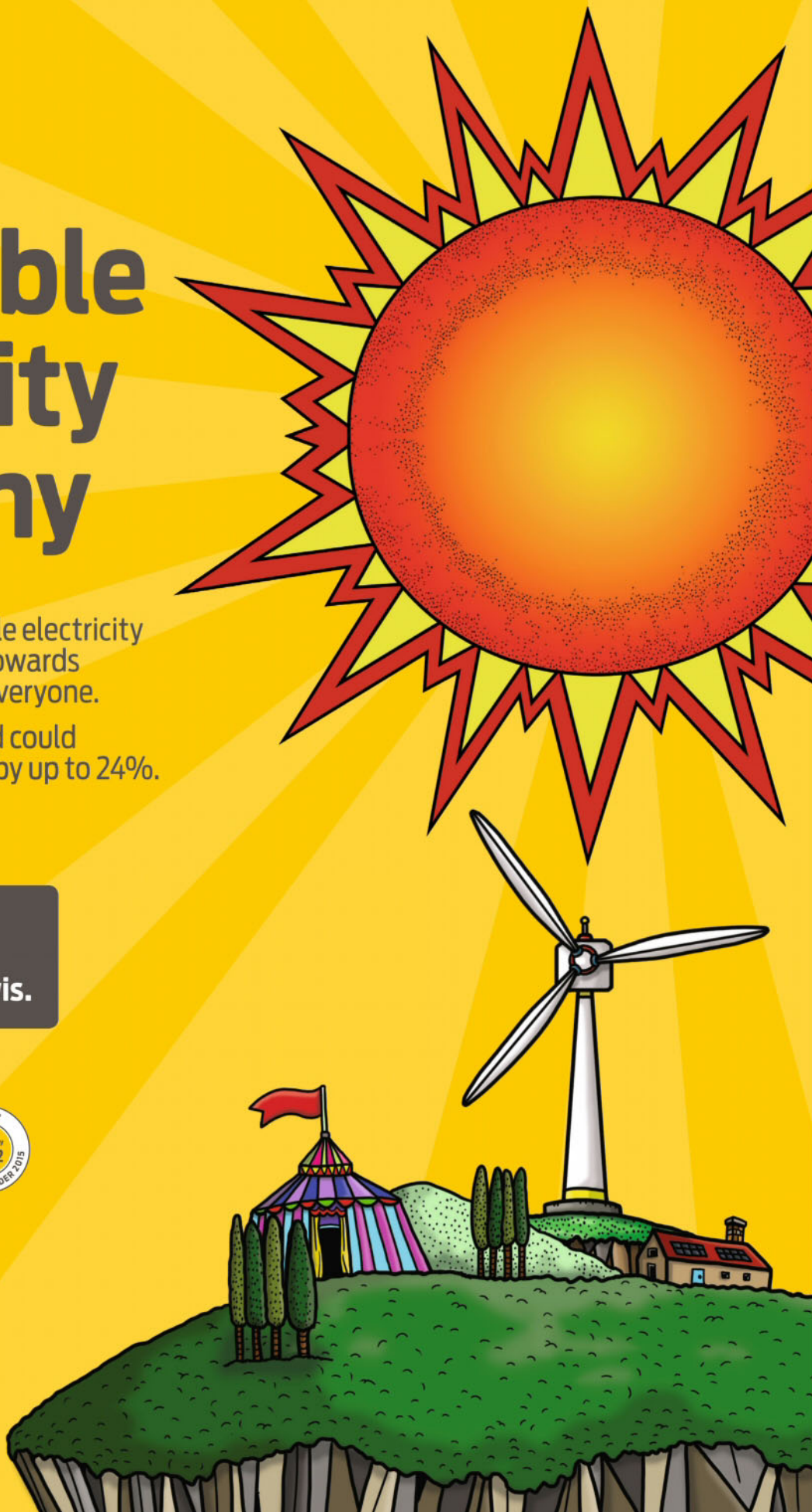
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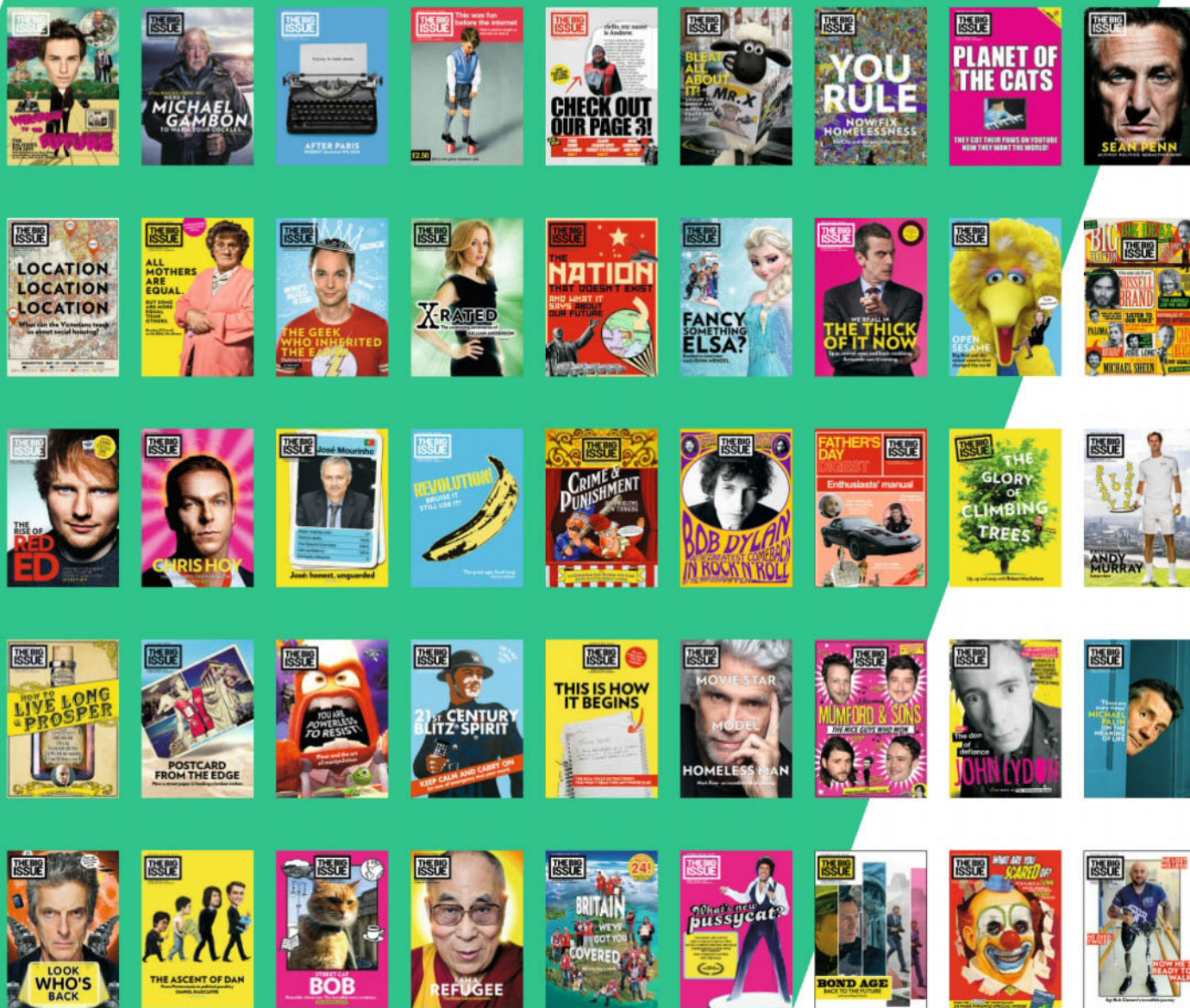
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THE ENLIGHTENMENT

BOOKS/FILM/RADIO/MUSIC/QUIZ



COVER STORIES

WHAT WE BROUGHT YOU IN 2015

From The Pope to the Dalai Lama via Prince William, Andy Murray and a Street Cat named Bob, thank you for joining us during 2015 and supporting our vendors. There will be plenty more to look forward to in 2016, including the 25th anniversary of The Big Issue. We know people cannot always find a vendor but are still keen to buy and to help our mission. Back issues are available at shop.bigissue.com and subscriptions from subscribe.bigissue.com – makes a perfect (last minute) Christmas gift!



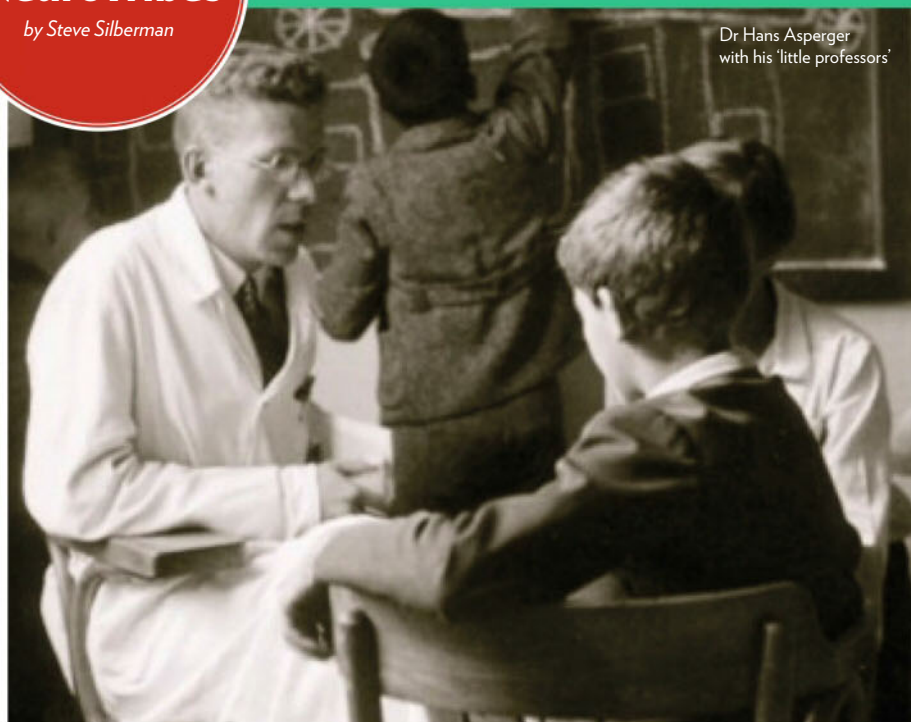


BEST BOOKS OF 2015

The Big Issue's
Book of 2015 is

NeuroTribes

by Steve Silberman



Dr Hans Asperger
with his 'little professors'

The whole world was having a conversation about autism

I'm honoured that The Big Issue has selected *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and How to Think Smarter About People Who Think Differently* as its Book of the Year, particularly since I feel that my book and The Big Issue share a common mission: improving the day-to-day lives of people who are struggling to have their basic human needs met.

The impetus for writing the book was dozens of emails that I got over a 10-year span following the publication of an article on autism in high-tech communities like Silicon Valley. The whole world seemed to be having a conversation about autism but it was almost entirely a loud and rancorous argument about what causes it, triggered by the now discredited theory that vaccines are to blame. As a result, many parents were understandably terrified about giving their children routine immunisations, and highly infectious diseases like measles and whooping cough – which once caused hundreds of thousands of

deaths each year – were on the rise again all over the world. Meanwhile, federal agencies in the US were investing billions of dollars in autism research but again, much of this work was focused on teasing out 'risk factors' in the human genome and toxins in the environment.

The autistic people and their families who were writing to me, however, were not obsessing about identifying potential causes of autism. Instead, they were wrestling with the lack of basic services and support for their children and themselves. They needed access to education, employment, housing and health care; they needed training programmes to help them or their kids transition from school to the workplace; they needed therapies and respite services; and most of all, they needed acceptance, respect and faith in

the potential of people on the spectrum to make meaningful contributions to their communities. But instead, they were bullied, excluded, overlooked and mistreated by the medical professionals they were supposed to



Much more than a history lesson, *NeuroTribes* is a triumph of uncommon thinking

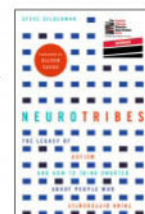
It's not often an encyclopaedic study of a medical condition results in a gripping page-turner that makes you want to stand and cheer at the end but Steve Silberman's *NeuroTribes* is no ordinary science report. Unlike most chroniclers of autism, Silberman is not a doctor or specialist of any kind – he is a journalist, and has the sense of drama, passion and mission innate to the best of them. He details the evolution of what was finally labelled autism in the 1940s; a disease some saw as a devastating affliction that banished all sufferers from normal society, and some, including the pioneering and, in Silberman's eyes, heroic Hans Asperger, saw as a challenge for the 'little professors' who would have all kinds of unusual positives and negatives to deal with throughout their lives.

There is so much to learn, and be fascinated by, in *NeuroTribes* – the impact of Nazi eugenics thinking; the dominance of Freudian theory in the US; the social penalties of decades of misunderstandings and misdirected blame-casting (from bad parenting to MMR). But what sticks in the mind most after reading *NeuroTribes* is how crucial a positive attitude to uncommon psychosocial conditions and personalities can be, both for those with the syndrome and for the rest of us as potential beneficiaries. Thus, as well as an unrivalled history of autism, *NeuroTribes* is a *cri de coeur*. And all the more potent for it.

Jane Graham, Big Issue books editor @Janeannie

trust. So I decided to write a book that would look at people on the spectrum through the prism of the social changes that had affected the scope of the diagnosis, rather than solely through the narrow lens of psychopathology. By listening to autistic men and women of all ages, I learned that they have much to offer the world – if we give them and their families the chance. I'm grateful to The Big Issue for seeing value in that approach, and for selecting *NeuroTribes* as its Book of the Year. Warm regards from San Francisco.

Steve Silberman is author of *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and How to Think Smarter About People Who Think Differently* (Allen & Unwin, £16.99)





TOP 5 EUROPEAN NOVELS PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH

IVÁN REPILA

1. THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Gonçalo M Tavares

All of Tavares' books are special: for imagination, bravery, originality. But in *The Neighborhood* live Calvino, Valéry, Juarroz, Kraus, Walser and Michaux. For any fan of literature, a fascinating journey.

2. PLATFORM

Michel Houellebecq



Houellebecq deconstructs myths and habits to show us that, even if we try hard, nothing makes sense. And that we have to cope with it. *Platform* is a masterpiece; cruel, terrifying, with the darkest humour and the strength of a punch in the stomach.

3. NOSTALGIA

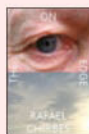
Mircea Cărtărescu

Poetic, lyrical and funny. One of the best writers alive. This unforgettable collection of short stories includes 'The Roulette Player', maybe the text that has had the most impact on me these last few years.

4. NEAPOLITAN NOVELS

Elena Ferrante

Ferrante built a perfect complex, and has reinvigorated the realistic novel with tools from our times. Moving, entertaining and deep, each one of the four books that compose this tetralogy is better than the previous one.



5. ON THE EDGE

Rafael Chirbes

A great master of Spanish literature – finally to be

published in English – his work is dense, feverish and political. This book expounds the misery of Spanish reality with no disguise, undressing it with the precision of a surgeon.

Ivan Repilo's *The Boy Who Stole Attila's Horse* is out now (Pushkin Press, £10)



RACHEL JOHNSON

My book of the year – and I would have said this before the kamikaze attacks on Paris – is Michel Houellebecq's *Submission* (William Heinemann, £18.99). In this compulsive, horrible, fluent, intimate work, we watch through the eyes of a dyspeptic, misogynist academic, Francois, as the 2022 election nears. France is divided between the far right of Marine Le Pen and the Muslim Fraternity. The Muslim Fraternity's leader Ben Abbas wins, sharia law comes into force, young girls are forced into marriage, Francois loses his job, and women take the veil. It's a novel that depicts, in slow-mo, how western Europe can go the way of the Roman Empire. Critics have called it a satire. But this dystopian nightmare – brilliant, and brilliantly translated by *The Paris Review* editor Lorin Stein – reads all too much like a prediction. **Rachel Johnson's *Fresh Hell* is out now (Penguin, £7.99)**



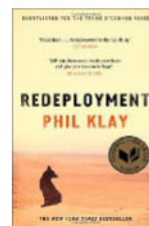
It is full of surprises for those who accept the 'Evil Russia

versus saintly Ukraine' narrative largely swallowed by the media, and full of important ammunition for those who prefer to think for themselves.

Read Peter Hitchens' blog for *The Mail on Sunday* at hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk

AL KENNEDY

Phil Klay's *Redeployment* (Canongate, £9.99) is a series of short stories about the war and occupation of Iraq. It's from the US' point of view but within that world it travels deep and far in a searing, pared-back prose style. This is a detailed examination of men pushed to the edge, directionless leadership, psychological stress, frailty, horror and absurd humour. It occupies the space where fiction travels beyond journalism and propaganda.



And please read *Just Mercy* by lawyer Bryan Stevenson (Spiegel & Grau, £10.55), a deeply moving and passionate investigation of the US legal system and its, sometimes fatal, failings. Stevenson redefines mercy as an instinct, and practical possibility in the face of all challenges and wounds. **AL Kennedy's *Doctor Who: The Drosen's Curse* is out now (BBC Books, £18.99)**



READERS' PICKS

@Bluebookballoon

The Seed Collectors by

@scarthomas – botany, sex, drink, families and vanished parents. All human life is there.



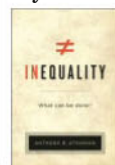
PETER HITCHENS

Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands by Richard Sakwa

(I.B. Tauris, £18.99) is a superb corrective to conventional wisdom on the Ukraine crisis.

MIKE SAVAGE

My book of the year is Tony



Atkinson's *Inequality* (Harvard University Press, £19.95).

One of the world's

READERS' PICKS

@JournolizF

Loved Anne Enright's *The Green Road*. Use of language & relentless eye for family relationships was wonderful.

leading economists, mentor of Piketty and associate of Stiglitz, has written this accessible overview of why inequality matters, and why we need a series of urgent policies to tackle it. You don't need to be an economist to appreciate this impressive synthesis of his life's thinking and work.

Mike Savage's *Social Class in the 21st Century* is out now (Pelican, £8.99)

ROBERT MACFARLANE

I'll break the rules first by mentioning a book that isn't strictly from 2015 – in fact is definitely not from 2015 – but I finally found my way to Simon Ings' novel *Wolves* (Gollancz, £8.99) from last year, and wondered firstly how it had taken me so long, and secondly why the film version hasn't already hit our screens. Ings works in that uncanny valley between contemporary realism and speculative futurism; the result is a biting, black tone that leaves you extremely unsettled and extremely gripped. Then, for something completely different, Julia Blackburn's



READERS' PICKS

@liveotherwise

M is for Autism. So very different to usual books on autism and written by autistic girls @Misforautism

TOP 5 BOOKS ABOUT REFUGEES GULWALI PASSARLAY



1. I AM MALALA Christina Lamb and Malala Yousafzai

Malala is a young girl who defines for me the bravery of the Pashtun tribe. I share her desire to campaign for a better world and feel a strong connection to her.

2. ENRIQUE'S JOURNEY Sonia Nazario

This Pulitzer Prize-winner recounts a Honduran boy's quest to find his mother, 11 years after she was forced to leave her starving family to find work in the US. Enrique uses wit, courage and hope to make it through hostile worlds full of thugs, bandits, and corrupt cops. His journey, although on a different continent, mirrors mine.

3. IN ORDER TO LIVE



Yeonmi Park

This compelling account of a North Korean defector is a great read. I am proud to be in contact with this writer, for whom I have huge admiration.

4. BORN UNDER A THOUSAND SHADOWS Andrea Busfield

A sad story about an Afghan street child. Corruption remains rife in Afghanistan, with aid money not going to those who need it. The ongoing conflict also badly affects children's lives.

5. A LONG WAY GONE: MEMOIRS OF A BOY SOLDIER Ishmael Beah

An account of a child soldier from Sierra Leone – brutalised and forced to kill – who escaped to New York and was fostered. He now has a BA in political science and is a UN ambassador. We have both used opportunities in our newly adopted countries to try and help change the world.

Gulwali Passarlay's
The Lightless Sky
is out now
(Atlantic, £18.99)



READERS' PICKS

@bee_happs

I love *Alex through the looking glass: How life reflects numbers and numbers reflect life*. Highly informative and fun #AlexBellos

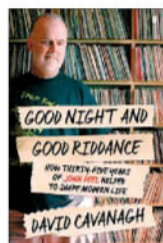
beautifully delicate
*Threads: The Delicate
Life of John Craske*

(Jonathan Cape, £25), her experimental biography of a Norfolk fisherman who was also a talented seamster.

Robert Macfarlane's *Landmarks* is out now (Hamish Hamilton, £20)

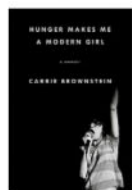
SIMON GARFIELD

I loved three music-related books this year. *Good Night and*



Good Riddance: How Thirty-Five Years of John Peel Helped To Shape Modern Life (Faber & Faber, £20) by David

Cavanagh was a clever, funny and painstaking tour not through a life but through a show. About 300 of Peel's Radio 1 broadcasts are mined for playlists, social context and choice quotes, and we're reminded how much anyone with ears still owes the great man. Peel loved Sleater-Kinney, and I think would have admired guitarist Carrie Brownstein's brooding memoir



Hunger Makes Me A Modern Girl (Virago, £16.99).

If you want a candid and compelling account of

growing up in the slipstream of grunge, this is the one. Patti Smith's second slice of memoir after *Just Kids* is just as engaging. *M Train* (Bloomsbury, £18.99) a book



about nothing and everything, as our minstrel-poet travels the world in search of muses, coffee and Scandinavian

noir. It reads like a dream, and you'll long for a freewheeling life like hers. Simon Garfield is the editor of *A Notable Woman: The Romantic Journals of Jean Lucey Pratt* (Canongate Books, £20)

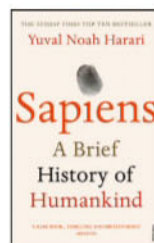
READERS' PICKS

@MWLeeming

The World is [Not] A Cold, Dead Place by @NathanOHagan - his portrayal of mental illness is darkly funny, sad and very accurate.

MATT HAIG

My book of the year was *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari (Vintage, £8.99). It is one of those books about the big stuff that reminds us that we are a species, and it contains some remarkable information on almost every page. For instance, the idea that humans only survived because we have



READERS' PICKS

@SMGreenArts

Woman w/a secret @sophiehannahCB1 and *Charles Lenox mysteries* by @CharlesFinch & hopefully soon @Beathhigh *Even Dogs in the wild*

the capacity to believe stuff that isn't real blew my mind. Our delusions save us. But may also end us, one day. It's both bleak and hopeful, like the animals we are.

Matt Haig's *A Boy Called Christmas* is out now (Canongate Books, £12.99)

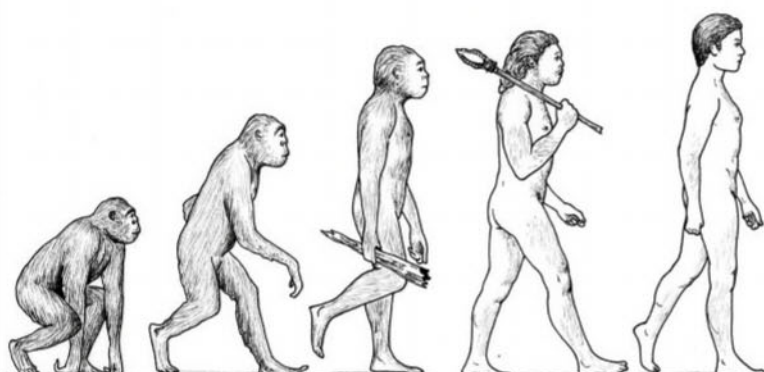
READERS' PICKS

@Shahroozadi

Mating in Captivity by @estherperel and *The Dark Net* by @JamieJBartlett

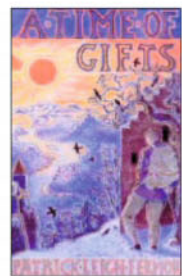
ADAM SISMAN

The book I have enjoyed most this year is not new, but one published almost 40 years ago: Patrick Leigh Fermor's *A Time of Gifts*. I should have read it before, I know, but for some reason I hadn't. In fact, the copy I read on holiday this summer was one I had given to my mother as a Christmas present back in 1978. What delights me about it now is its freshness; here is the story of a





very young man, only 18, who sets out on foot, a rucksack on his back, to walk from the Hook of Holland to Constantinople.



The year is 1933, before the old regime in Europe was swept away forever: apparently a more innocent and generous time. Leigh Fermor's unflinching cheerfulness in the face of adversity and hardship is invigorating: this is a book that reminds you what it feels like to be young.

Adam Sisman's *John le Carre: The Biography* is out now (Bloomsbury, £25)

READERS' PICKS

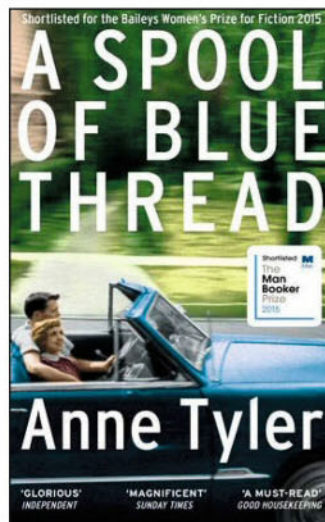
@jamesjamesbrown
*The World Is (Not)
A Cold Dead Place* by
@NathanOHagan on
@ArmleyPress

AYELET GUNDAR-GOSHEN

On January 7, two terrorists killed 11 people at the offices of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo. On the back

cover of the weekly edition was a caricature of Michel Houellebecq. The author was there because of his new novel, *Submission*, a political dystopia describing France under Islamic law. This novel is Islamophobic, nihilistic and lacks a single gram of humanism. Even so, it's my book of the year. 2015 started with the Charlie Hebdo shooting and ended with Paris on fire. Between these two hate crimes, Houellebecq's novel presents a sophisticated literary response, that is also full of hatred – hatred of Muslims, of French liberals, of women, of intellectuals. In the ongoing dance between real life and literature, Houellebecq's novel is a hell of a can-can.

Ayelet Gundar-Goshen is the author of *One Night, Markovitch* (Pushkin Press, £10)



DAVID BADDIEL

My book of the year is Anne Tyler's *A Spool of Blue Thread*. It's not revolutionary, especially if you've read all her other novels – Tyler is an author who has taken John Updike's dictum that the job of art is "to give the mundane its extraordinary due" to, possibly, extraordinary lengths; her novels, always, are microscopic tapestries of domestic detail. What's astonishing about this story, however, is the control of time; it spans three generations over 100 years, without seeming grandiose. Because as Tyler herself said: "The flow of time... it's as much adventure as anyone could wish." David Baddiel's *The Person Controller* (Harper Collins, £12.99) is out now

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TOP 5 CHILLERS FOR A WINTER READ

KEITH LEE MORRIS



1. THE ROAD
Cormac McCarthy
The only novel that has ever kept me sleepless for an entire night. Almost every page contains some new terror, and yet at this book's heart is a tender story about a man's devotion to his son, and the son's devotion in return. Devastating and unforgettable.

2. SILENT SNOW, SECRET SNOW

Conrad Aiken
This friend of TS Eliot creates a mesmerising, heartbreaking short story about a boy slipping slowly into what appears to be a catatonic state, engulfed by imaginary drifts of snow. A beautiful and unsettling tale.

3. NEVER LET ME GO

Kazuo Ishiguro
In this dystopian soon-to-be-classic, Ishiguro turns his attention to clones created for the purpose of organ harvesting. The scariest – and the saddest – aspect of this haunting novel is that nobody seems particularly surprised by the arrangement.

4. THE FIFTH CHILD

Doris Lessing
A nightmarish story of family planning gone terribly awry – expectant mothers and fathers beware! Is Ben Lovatt a changeling, a goblin, an alien, a troll? Who can say? He's bad news, that's all we know.

5. THE SECRET HISTORY

Donna Tartt
A group of college friends devoted to the study of classics creates a secret society of Bacchanalian pleasures and ends up preying on one of its own. The debut novel by last year's Pulitzer Prize winner.

Travellers Rest by Keith Lee Morris (Weidenfeld & Nicolson), January 7 in hardback, £14.99; eBook, £7.99





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SCREEN



FILM / EDWARD LAWRENSON

A festive buzz

With the *Star Wars* juggernaut taking over cinemas, turn on the TV this Christmas for the biggest choice of films

Christmas is cancelled this year – in cinemas at least. *Star Wars* (which still hasn't screened as we go to press) is rumbling into view, set to obliterate any other films reckless enough to venture onto screens at the same time. Apart from narrowing down our choice of films to see at the multiplex (essentially, anything you want as long as it's *The Force Awakens*), I can't be cynical about this massive release.

That's partly due to the trusted pair of hands of its director JJ Abrams. Combining the guileless love for the series of a true fan with proper storytelling chops, he'll do a classy job of resuscitating the franchise – as he did with *Star Trek*. His rollicking 2009 take on the adventures of Kirk, Spock and the rest, with Chris Pine heading up the cast as the puppyishly youthful future captain of the *Enterprise*, is screening at 8pm on December 19, Channel 4.

Because of the Death Star-sized colossus hanging over most cinemas, it's to TV you need to turn for the best and most diverse selection of films this Christmas. There's the usual selection of big family films (BBC One's 3.05pm screening of *Toy Story 3* on Dec 20 would be my favourite, the loveliest and most melancholy of Pixar's timeless trilogy), classic stalwarts (I feel I'm pro-

fessionally obligated to inform you Frank Capra's sublimely uplifting 1946 *It's a Wonderful Life* is on Channel 4 at 2.15pm on Christmas Eve), and splashy big Hollywood releases (on Christmas Day, also at 2.15pm, Sky Movies is showing Kenneth Branagh's sugary live-action take on *Cinderella*).

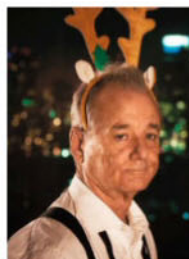
Perhaps it's a sign of changing tastes but there seem to be fewer of those vintage Hollywood musicals that were once a staple of Christmas. Still, BBC Four is presenting (on Dec 27 at 9pm) a TV version of the recent stage production of *Gypsy*, Jule Styne and Stephen Sondheim's rousing 1959 musical *Gypsy* (itself made into a Hollywood film in 1962). Imelda Staunton plays the force-of-nature stage mum Rose – it should be a treat.

And if that doesn't sate your appetite for outsized showbiz egos, let me direct you to BBC Two's 9pm screening on Dec 28 of *Behind the Candelabra*. In a performance that's as dazzling as it is unexpected, Michael Douglas is Liberace – probably one of the few figures who can promise more camp than Christmas itself.

Stuffed with feelgood films, the festive schedules aren't ideal for more edgy or challenging fare. Film4 is providing an

exquisite retreat from the clanging good cheer with a season from Japanese animation outfit Studio Ghibli, culminating in their Christmas Day screening of director Hayao Miyazaki's dreamily gorgeous *Howl's Moving Castle* (at 1.20pm). And for Hitchcock fans, *Marnie* emerges on BBC Two in the small hours of December 27 (1am), his 1964 thriller about a beautiful blonde kleptomaniac with a phobia of the colour red. It's Hitchcock at his darkest and kinkiest – which is to say very dark and very kinky indeed.

One of my favourite Christmas treats this year isn't on TV as such but on Netflix. In *A Very Murray Christmas* Bill Murray plays himself, holed up by a blizzard in a classy New York hotel, with only a few celebrity guests, a songbook of Christmas perennials and a limitless supply of hard liquor for company. Director Sofia Coppola – whose last encounter with Murray in an off-season hotel was the wonderful *Lost in Translation* – orchestrates the gags and songs with the effortless breeze of Manhattan's best party host. George Clooney is one of many special appearances in an hour-long tongue-in-cheek tribute to those swingin' US festive specials from the 1960s. Oh, and Murray proves he's quite the crooner. It's ridiculously good fun – and you'll want to check in next Christmas.



Have a Murray Christmas!

FINAL REEL...

Non-*Star Wars* cinema highlights:

The Peanuts Movie, in which Snoopy, Charlie Brown et al are lovingly transformed into CGI; Will Ferrell is a competitive stepdad in **Daddy's Home**; Tina Fey and Amy Poehler are chalk-and-cheese siblings in **Sisters**.

SPARE A THOUGHT

THIS Christmas

BUY
A PET A
CHRISTMAS
DINNER



At The Mayhew we are able to help hundreds of dogs and cats every year escape a life of neglect and find a loving home.

However, many homeless animals will be spending Christmas at The Mayhew this year, desperately hoping to find their forever homes in the New Year.

Will you help make the festive season special for our animals by buying a Christmas dinner and treat for just £10?

Yes! I want to treat a homeless animal this Christmas

£5 £10* £20 £30 Other £

*(£10 could pay for a scrumptious animal-friendly Christmas dinner and toy to play with)

I enclose a cheque/PO made payable to 'The Mayhew Animal Home' OR please complete your credit/debit card details below:

Please debit my MasterCard/Visa/Maestro (delete as appropriate)
Credit/debit card no.

Start date Expiry date Issue no.

Signature

Date

Name

Address

Postcode

We will never supply your details to any other organisation.

Email (optional)

The Mayhew Animal Home may wish to send you further information by email. Only fill in your email address if you wish to be contacted in this way.

Please send this form with your gift to:

The Mayhew Animal Home, Trenmar Gardens,
London NW10 6BJ.

Tel: 020 8206 5870 www.themayhew.org/christmas

Registered charity no. 1077588



BL141215

Christmas on the streets

– or a new start with St Mungo's Broadway?



Andrew and his dog Sammy,
St Mungo's Broadway residents

A warm bed and hot meal are just the start of the long-term support St Mungo's Broadway offers every single night of the year. In fact, we do all we can to help homeless people turn their lives around.

A gift of just £25 could help a person off the streets for good.

We provide everything from specialist drug, alcohol and mental health support to job skills and employment programmes. And every night 2,500 homeless men and women (and their dogs!) sleep safely under a St Mungo's Broadway roof.

Will you help us give homeless people a future now?

Please support St Mungo's Broadway with your Christmas donation today.

mungosbroadway.org.uk/andrew

St Mungo's Broadway always tries to persuade central and local government to fund a comprehensive service. Your gift is vital to complement that funding. St Mungo Community Housing Association Reg Charity No 1149085.

Andrew's story is true and as told by a homeless person, we have changed his name and image to protect his identity.

Yes, I would like to support the work of St Mungo's Broadway and I enclose a cheque/PO/CAF voucher made payable to St Mungo's Broadway for £..... or please debit my Visa/Mastercard/Maestro/CAF

Card number

Start date

Exp. date

Issue No.

(Maestro only)

Maestro only

Signature.....Date.....

(PRINT) Title.....First Name.....Surname.....

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Don't forget to include your name and address to allow us to claim Gift Aid.

Gift Aid makes every £1 you give worth 25% more.

*Please tick as appropriate

☐ Yes, please treat this donation and all gifts of money made to St Mungo's Broadway in the past, present and in future as Gift Aid donations.*

You must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that St Mungo's Broadway and all other charities you donate to will reclaim on your gifts for that tax year (excluding VAT and Council Tax). We will reclaim 25p in tax on every £1 you donate. This Declaration can be withdrawn at any time by notifying us.

☐ No, I am not a UK taxpayer.*

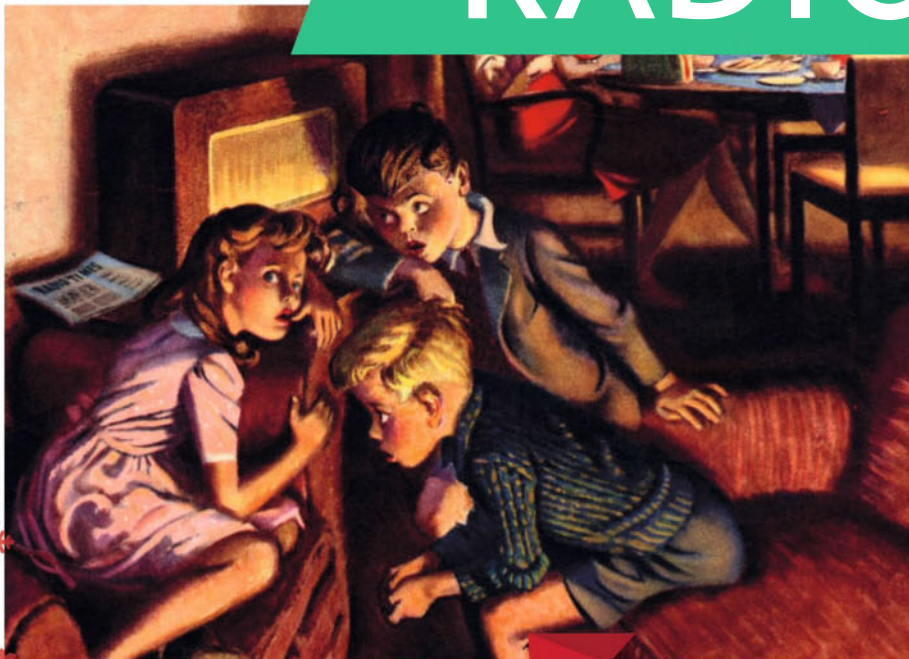
Data Protection: We will never sell your details on. To keep you informed on how your support is making a difference, we would like to contact you by post in the future. Please tick here if you do NOT wish to be contacted. ☐



Post to: Freepost RSYJ-HGEK-RGBX, St Mungo's Broadway (B12),
126 Fairlie Road, SLOUGH SL1 4PY

15NOVREPRESSB12

RADIO



JAMES O'BRIEN

We're still tuned in

Video hasn't killed the radio star. Here's why...

It is the oldest of 'old media' – at least in broadcasting terms – and facing more competition than at any other point in its history, so radio should by now have seen a serious slump in its popularity. We download podcasts and listen back at leisure where once the spoken word could be enjoyed live or not at all. Music streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music, where the 'DJ' has been mostly consigned to oblivion, are taking chunks out of record sales, and so, by rights, should really be wreaking similar havoc on music radio.

Worse still, the traditional unique selling point of radio – basic portability and ease of access – has been completely dismantled by smartphones, laptops and tablets but while television has buckled a bit under the attendant onslaught of the internet, video's attempts to kill off the radio star have clearly failed comprehensively.

That British radio approaches the end of 2015 in finer fettle than ever before is testament, in this listener and presenter's humble opinion, to two things: its continuing appeal to creative minds that might

find more money and fame in other areas but choose not to look for it, and the unique nature of interaction with a medium that is at once intimate and universal, public and private.

Lists are never definitive but Chris Moyles' return to the airwaves – at the breakfast helm of Radio X, a rebranded XFM – was almost certainly the most significant personnel-related event of the year. The man is a genius, albeit one who would probably agree with this assessment a little too readily. I work in the same building (and for the same parent company) and can report that, in terms of online listening, he really did 'break the internet' during his first week on air. Moyles is the embodiment of 'trusted company' – the holy grail of personality radio – and possesses a sense of mischief that members of previous generations might have been expected to have grown out of by now.

I would apply the same description to Iain Lee, whose fortunes have moved in the opposite direction this year. He was 'let go' by BBC Three Counties Radio, despite picking up a Sony Gold Award and the Nick Clarke prize for interviewing, after

effectively calling a bigot a bigot during an interview about homophobic preaching. The longer Lee stays off air, the poorer British radio will be.

Auntie covered herself in glory in other areas, though. The Radio 1 Ibiza Prom was a thing of absolute beauty, with Pete Tong presiding over full orchestra versions of dance music classics. Great radio often involves risk, and seeing that description written down makes me realise just how horrible it could have been in the wrong hands.

Listeners to *The Archers* (Radio 4) have, by contrast, spent most of the year wondering just how horrible Rob Titchener will ultimately prove to be. His slow and sinister grooming of his admittedly insipid wife, Helen Archer, has achieved almost unbearable tension and upset a lot of listeners. They know he's rotten to the core but Ambridge remains oblivious. In 2016 we must surely see the truth emerge. It will not be pretty.

For me, the big development of 2015 has been radio's warm embrace of modern technologies that could have been seen as rivals. Websites like Audioboom have indefinitely extended the shelf life of clips and segments that would once have disappeared into the ether. More than one million people, for example, downloaded a 10-minute clip of me explaining to a caller why he was wrong to call for 'all Muslims' to apologise for the Charlie Hebdo killings.

I've got no idea what will happen on the radio next year – an observation that holds as true for the entire industry as it does for my own pootlings. And that fundamental unpredictability must be a very large part of why the medium remains so robust.

James O'Brien is a radio heavyweight and TV presenter. Listen to him weekdays from 10am on LBC @mrjamesob



OUT AND ABOUT

This week you can: **Burn the Clocks** in Brighton, spy on **Tintin** in London or take the plunge and race 100 yards up the **Serpentine**. For full listings, see bigissue.com

TREATING PROSTATE CANCER QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

For a **FREE** copy of this booklet please contact us at the address below
Quoting BI2015.

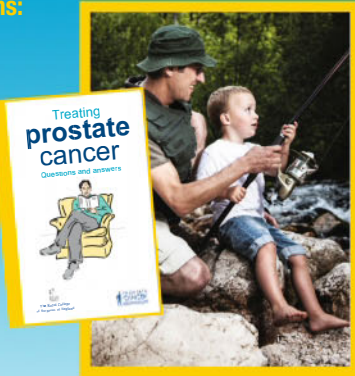
This booklet has two aims:

- to help you become better informed about prostate cancer and its treatment.
- to guide you in the decisions you will make about your care with your doctor.

It cannot replace talking to your GP or hospital doctor.

If you can help us by raising funds for our research or to make a donation please contact us at the address below.


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PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

YOUNG PEOPLE FACE ANGER AT HOME THIS CHRISTMAS

Anger at home is a significant cause of homelessness among young people, The Big Issue reports. That's according to a survey by Centrepoin, the leading charity for homeless people aged 16 to 25. While some families are looking forward to spending Christmas together, eating dinner and opening presents under the tree, for some young people home isn't a safe place. Tension, arguments and sometimes physical violence are a daily occurrence.

As a result, vulnerable young people can find themselves thrown out of their homes with nowhere to go, into an even more dangerous situation. People like Sarah, 17, who had a volatile relationship with her family. She lived with her mum, dad and brother but daily arguments took their toll. Eventually she was asked to leave. "Our relationship completely



Young people are being forced out of their homes

broke down and we couldn't be in the same place any more. My parents said I had to just go and stand on my own two feet." she says. "Me and my brother ended up getting kicked out at the same time. We'd been kicked out many times before, it'd be for a week or a couple of days, but this time it was for good."

In a survey* of 2,011 homeless young people, 59 per cent said they'd experienced

anger and abuse at home. And 22 per cent said their arguments turned to violence, compared to only two per cent of young people who'd never been homeless. The constant grind of arguments can make life unbearable. Cayla, 21, who clashed with her parents, says: "I used to get into arguments with my dad. Sometimes we got into physical fights and neighbours would call the police. There was a lot of hate in my heart."

Unable to live at home, and feeling unsafe and isolated, young people are being forced to take desperate measures – sleeping rough in parks and on streets, and experiencing more violence and abuse in the wider world.



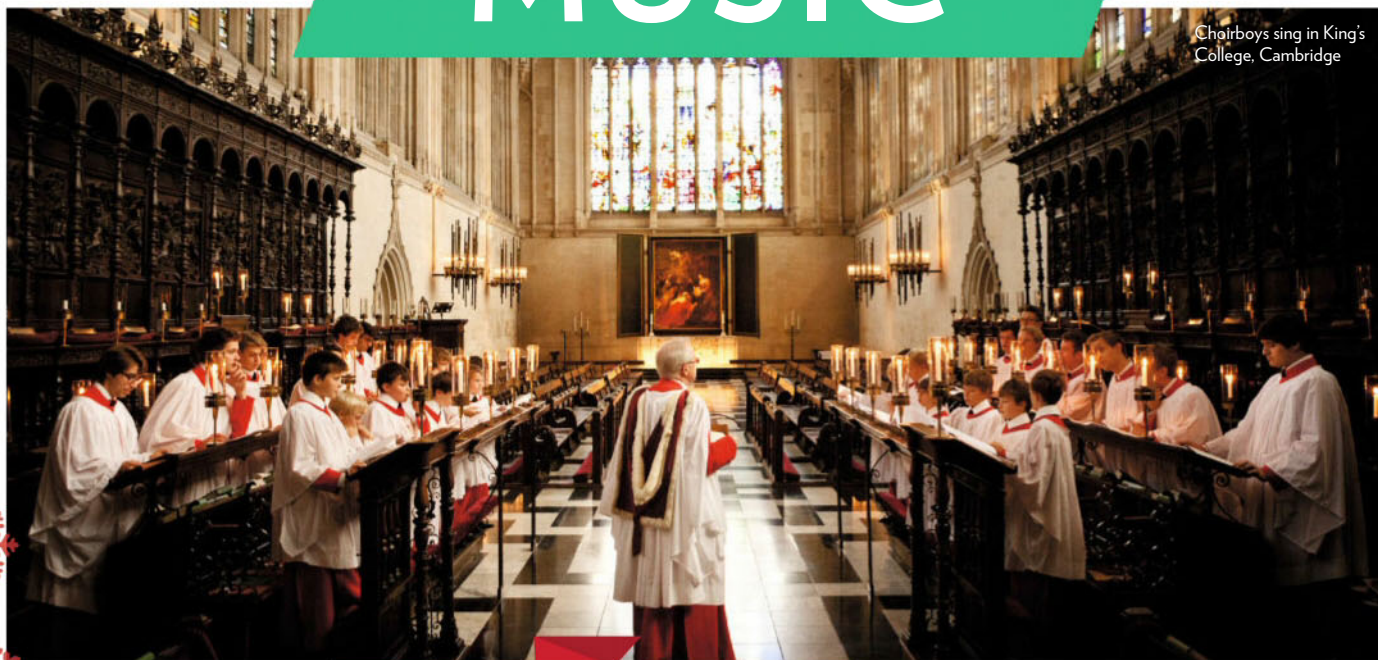
FOR MORE INFORMATION
centrepoin.org.uk/donate
0800 138 3242

How can the cycle be stopped? To find out how Centrepoin – and you – can help young homeless people this Christmas, turn to page 50 now.

*ComRes interviewed 2,011 young people, aged between 16 and 25, online in the UK between October 13-21, 2014. Data was weighted to be representative of young people in the UK aged between 16 and 25, by age, gender and region. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

MUSIC

Choirboys sing in King's College, Cambridge



DAVID FAY

Singing from the same hymn sheet

Why does the nation remain so devoted to carols?

Carols have always been a communal phenomenon; originally medieval English dance-songs, after 600 years they still generate a sense of sentimentality and nostalgia in our superfast, interconnected modern world. Perhaps it's because we learn to sing them as children, when Christmas is at its most exciting: for kids, they are the musical harbingers of treats, presents and a time when they are the centre of their parents' attention. Later in life they reconnect us with our inner child – and the world beyond our front door. But is there more to it?

Anthropologist Daniel Miller says there are many layers to that yearning for a sense of belonging. "Christmas is a festival that aims to make the family not just sacred but an idiom for society more generally, including the local community or neighbourhood but also the national family," he explains.

"It works best as a unifying festival, connecting people with their own traditions of celebration and with past generations. Simultaneously, it connects the domestic family, the region and nation through to an ideal of global humanity, celebrating the same festival at the same time."

The old Hollywood image of families glowingly bunched around the piano, sweetly harmonising *O Little Town*, is a rare sight nowadays. Yet carols remain an essential part of Christmas nostalgia. "In Britain we place considerable emphasis on re-establishing a version of the domestic at Christmas time, rediscovering a certain sentimentality for this idealised vision of family life," says Miller.

Of course, this rose-tinted vision is a world away from the reality many people live through at Christmas. In fact, it goes some way towards explaining why it can be such a difficult time for those who cannot enjoy such an idealised familial festival. In a world where many people feel isolated, any instance of singing, playing or hearing carols is part of the Christmas impulse towards a greater connection to each other, a communal act of fellowship and love. "It's generational," says Andrew Blyth. "The familiar tunes bind people together, young and old." As a bandmaster and assistant music director in the Salvation Army, he has spent his life playing carols to a surprising variety of people. "Once Gordon Brown asked us to play

carols for a group of ambassadors and dignitaries outside Number 10," he recalls. "Later that day we played to inmates at Holloway Prison. The diversity of privilege between the groups was immense – you had to pinch yourself to believe it was real – but it was bridged by the music and the message and what carols can bring: the power of Christmas, really."

Carols also speak to an impulse to reach out to those in need. All over the country choirs raise money for charities, students sing carols in retirement homes and Salvation Army bands play them on the streets, in hospitals and prisons. "The public is very generous towards the Salvation Army at this time of year," says Blyth. "We play carols to raise awareness of the work we do and why we do it. Even on Christmas Day our churches and centres are open, keeping people fed and entertained. What we're saying – aside from proclaiming Christ's birth – is 'we're here for you'. That's fundamental."

Miller points out that, regardless of widespread secularity in cultural life, there remains a deeper, spiritual message behind the nation's continued love of carols. "The celebration of the family remains central to Christmas. It's the single most important occasion in the year for the family to be together. This emphasis retains the original core reference of Christmas, which is to the creation of a divine family."

Could there be greater testament to this global unity than the millions who will tune in at 3pm GMT on December 24, on radios and TVs, to hear a choirboy in King's College, Cambridge, sing those spine-tingling first notes of *Once in Royal David's City*?

David Fay is Big Issue's classical music columnist



THE CHRISTMAS GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

At CARE International, we know that sometimes, all people need is a little investment to change their lives forever.

That's why we've set up this revolutionary way to help some of the world's poorest people work their own way out of poverty with dignity. It's called **lendwithcare.org** – instead of a donation **lendwithcare.org** allows you to lend as little as £15 to fund a small business overseas.

And this Christmas, if you buy a **lendwithcare.org** gift voucher, you can give your friends or family the chance to choose which business they want to fund, and then when their loan is paid back they can either withdraw the £15 or re-lend it again and again to other hard working entrepreneurs.

Visit **www.lendwithcare.org** today and give the gift of opportunity this Christmas.

lendwithcare.org

How does it work?

- 1 Buy a gift voucher at **www.lendwithcare.org/gift_vouchers**
Vouchers can be printed or emailed.
- 2 The voucher recipient chooses who to lend their £15 to.
- 3 The entrepreneur's business begins to grow.
- 4 The loan is paid back to your friend or relative and they choose what to do next.
- 5 You have helped someone in a developing country improve the lives of their whole family and both you and your friend get a nice warm feeling.



BIG ISSUE QUIZ OF THE YEAR

How closely have you been reading your Big Issue in 2015? Our quiz of the year will find out. Pit yourself against the various teasers below, all themed on content from the magazine over the last 12 months, then tweet your score @BigIssue #bigissuequiz

LOVE / HATE

The things famous people liked in 2015, and the things they didn't like. Who said what? Match the faces to the quotes...



PETER CAPALDI



COLIN FARRELL



GILLIAN ANDERSON



LAUREN MAYBERRY



DANIEL RADCLIFFE



BEN WHISHAW

1. Loves:
The Big Issue!
"I think The Big Issue is amazing"

2. Loves:
The BBC!
"Nobody else does what the BBC does"

3. Hates:
Internet trolls!
"I can't ban them from real life but I can ban them from the Facebook page, so they don't say abusive and horrible things to the other fans."

4. Loves:
Jeremy Corbyn!
"He reminds me, in the loveliest way, of my English teacher, who is someone I am very, very fond of."

5. Loves:
Disney!
"I've watched every Disney film from the '80s onwards"

6. Hates:
The Hollywood gender pay gap!
"It is still a problem. In a very, very big way."

THE BIG PICK

A selection of multiple-choice posers based on random, funny, fascinating and daft titbits from our celebrity chats.

- Mumford and Sons singer Marcus Mumford claims he learned to sing thanks to which formative experience of his youth?
a) Being in a school choir
b) Being in a teenage boyband
c) Being on the dole
- Owing to his pronounced nose, which film star did Scottish soul-pop sensation Paolo Nutini joke would be most apt to play him in the movie of his life, should one ever be made?
a) Adrien Brody
b) Liam Hemsworth
c) Gérard Depardieu
- Prior to becoming a pop star, Paloma Faith claims she did "literally every job you could

imagine". We imagined one job she hadn't done - which is it?

- Life-drawing model
 - Water slide tester
 - Ghost train assistant
- Actor David Hasselhoff credits the enormous success of Baywatch to which of its, um, assets?
a) Sunshine, water and Mitch Buchannon's relationship with his son
b) Believable feats of heroic lifesaving
c) The swimsuits
 - Former Manchester United footballer turned TV pundit Gary Neville is all about protecting the environment. Which of the following is one of his major commitments to green living?
a) He drives a plug-in electric car
b) He lives in a house powered by methane gas from cow poo

c) He uses a solar-powered smartphone

- Which 2015 Big Issue cover star achieved the fastest time any celebrity has recorded racing around the track in "mildly moist" conditions in Top Gear's 'Star in a Reasonably Priced Car' feature?
a) The Pope
b) Peter Andre
c) Gillian Anderson
- Which superpower did tennis superstar Andy Murray admit he'd love to have?
a) Teleportation
b) X-ray vision
c) An unstoppable serve
- Ed Sheeran admitted in his May cover interview with The Big Issue to once waking up after a wild party on which '90s TV superstar's swimming pool lounge?
a) Robson Green
b) David Duchovny

c) Jennifer Aniston

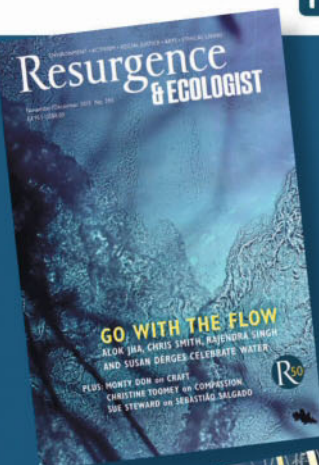
- "No offence," spoke José Mourinho of his taste in tunes, "but for me my music is what I call proper music." Which of these artists is so special to the Special One?
a) Bryan Adams
b) Ryan Adams
c) Adam and the Ants
- When Pope Francis was a little boy he wanted to grow up to be something much less divine than the leader of the worldwide Catholic Church. What was his dream job?
a) Butcher
b) Baker
c) Candlestick maker

HOW DID YOU SCORE?
0-15: YOU'VE GOT ISSUES
16-25: BIG SCORE, ISH
26-36: BINGO!

LOVE / HATE ANSWERS: 1. PETER CAPALDI 2. PETER CAPALDI 3. LAUREN MAYBERRY 4. DANIEL RADCLIFFE 5. BEN WHISHAW 6. GILLIAN ANDERSON 7. GILLIAN ANDERSON 8. GILLIAN ANDERSON 9. GILLIAN ANDERSON 10. GILLIAN ANDERSON 11. GILLIAN ANDERSON 12. GILLIAN ANDERSON 13. GILLIAN ANDERSON 14. GILLIAN ANDERSON 15. GILLIAN ANDERSON 16. GILLIAN ANDERSON 17. GILLIAN ANDERSON 18. GILLIAN ANDERSON 19. GILLIAN ANDERSON 20. GILLIAN ANDERSON 21. GILLIAN ANDERSON 22. GILLIAN ANDERSON 23. GILLIAN ANDERSON 24. GILLIAN ANDERSON 25. GILLIAN ANDERSON 26. GILLIAN ANDERSON 27. GILLIAN ANDERSON 28. GILLIAN ANDERSON 29. GILLIAN ANDERSON 30. GILLIAN ANDERSON 31. GILLIAN ANDERSON 32. GILLIAN ANDERSON 33. GILLIAN ANDERSON 34. GILLIAN ANDERSON 35. GILLIAN ANDERSON 36. GILLIAN ANDERSON

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PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

TURN TO CENTREPOINT THIS CHRISTMAS

More than 15,000 young people will be homeless this Christmas. More than half of those young people will have had to leave their homes because of anger, tension and volatile situations with their families.

Centrepoint, the UK's leading charity for homeless people aged 16 to 25, supports young people who have come from traumatic family situations at home. Since 1969, they have helped more than 100,000 young people move on and live independent lives. The charity helps 8,400 young homeless people a year. It offers clean and safe hostel accommodation young people can call home.

However, Centrepoint does more than just provide much-needed accommodation. The charity works to support young people to help them overcome abuse or traumas, and teaches basic life skills so they can live independent lives. To help them build a brighter future, Centrepoint also offers vital training so that homeless young people can find work or go into further education.



The good news is, Centrepoint's approach really works. Eighty-nine per cent of young people move on from Centrepoint into a job, education or their own home.

And you can help.

Just £15 goes a long way to help young homeless people this Christmas. It's a small price to pay to change a life for the better.



HOW TO HELP A YOUNG PERSON THIS CHRISTMAS

What homeless young people really need this Christmas.

£15 could give a young person a hot meal, a warm, safe bed and someone to talk to.

£50 could provide someone with clean clothes, a warm, safe bed and essential health checks.

£100 could provide a warm, safe bed over Christmas, plus the professional support these young people need to turn their lives around.

Donate to Centrepoint today
at centrepoint.org.uk/donate
or call us on 0800 23 23 20



THE BIG QUIZ

LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF QUOTES CONUNDRUM

Personalities have imparted many a pearl of wisdom to their younger selves this year, in this long-running weekly Big Issue feature. Can you figure out from the quotes who wanted to tell what to their 16-year-old selves?

2 "Watch Alan Partridge."

Dr John Cooper Clarke

4. "Curly's good, let it all hang out man. You look great."

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi

1. "Don't consider the path that will make you money, go down the path that will make your heart sing."

Shaun Ryder

3 "If you think of life as a play, you're the bumbling forgetful character who appears in scene seven looking for his keys."

Beck

6. "Focus on music with a stronger intensity."

Mary Portas

7. "Just pay the 150 f**king grand and move on."

Lorraine Bracco

5. "Don't get married the first time – skip straight to the second one."

Dylan Moran

9. "Lighten up"

Peter Andre

10. "Anybody who says 'no', tell them to f**k off!"

50 Cent

Michael Palin

8. "You'll end up married to a man you knew and despised at high school."

MY PECCADILLO CHALLENGE

Every week in The Big Issue we ask celebrities to talk about their favourite indulgences. Try to connect the faces with their peccadillos...



STEPHEN MORRIS



BELINDA CARLISLE



RUTGER HAUER



BEZ



MATT BERRY



CHRIS PACKHAM



BILL BAILEY



PAUL HEATON



JOE LAYTON



HENRY WINKLER



LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF QUOTES CONUNDRUM ANSWERS: 1. MARY PORTAS 2. MICHAEL PALIN 3. DYLAN MORAN 4. PETER ANDRE (ON HIS TEENAGE HAIR) 5. DR JOHN COOPER CLARKE 6. 50 CENT 7. SHAUN RYDER (ON AVOIDING AN EXPENSIVE COURT CASE) 8. BARONESS SAYEEDA WARSII 9. BECK
MY PECCADILLO CHALLENGE ANSWERS: MATT BERRY - PROPAGANDA POSTERS, BEZ - TANKS, JOE LAYTON - SAUSAGES, CHRIS PACKHAM - AVANTE FONZ) - FLY FISHING, PAUL HEATON - CRISP PACKETS, STEPHEN MORRIS (NEW ORDER) - TANKS, JOE LAYTON - SAUSAGES, CHRIS PACKHAM - AVANTE
FONZ) - FLY FISHING, PAUL HEATON - CRISP PACKETS, STEPHEN MORRIS (NEW ORDER) - TANKS, JOE LAYTON - SAUSAGES, CHRIS PACKHAM - AVANTE
FONZ) - FLY FISHING, PAUL HEATON - CRISP PACKETS, STEPHEN MORRIS (NEW ORDER) - TANKS, JOE LAYTON - SAUSAGES, CHRIS PACKHAM - AVANTE

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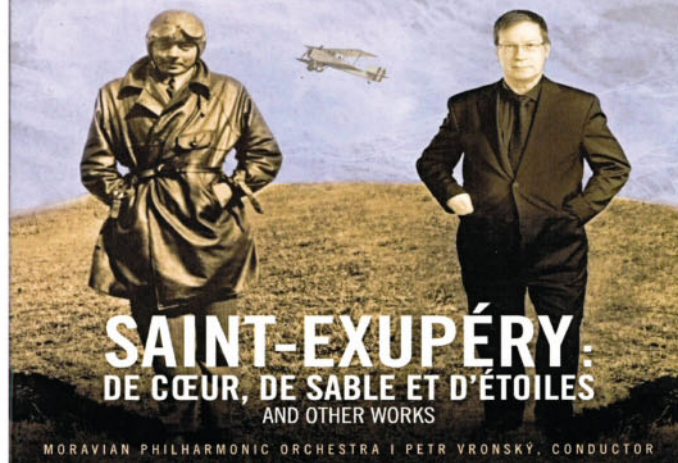
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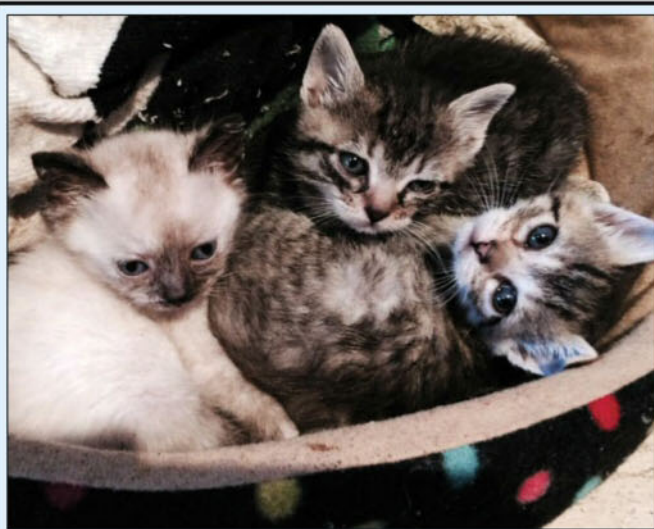
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To find out more, please go to 'Volunteer for us' on our website at www.bigissue.com or apply directly by e-mail at personnel@bigissue.com quoting the position you wish to apply for.

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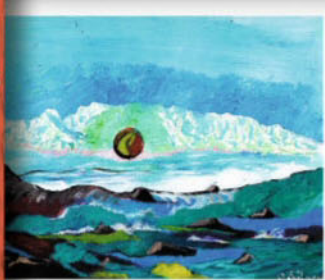
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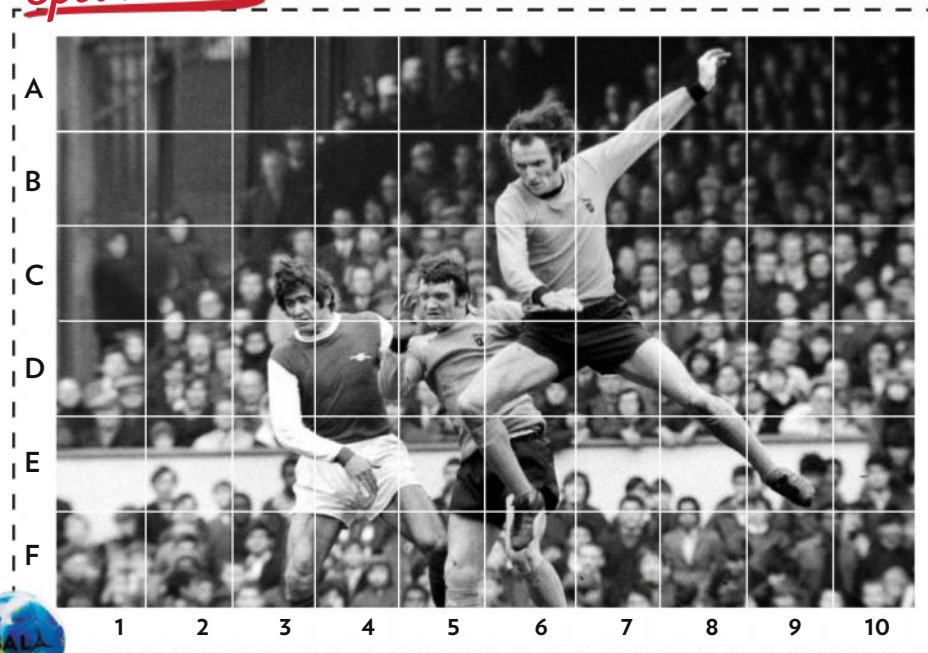


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GAMES & PUZZLES

Spot the ball



Photos: Action Images

To win a Bala Fairtrade-certified football, mark where you think the ball is, cut out and send to: Spot the Ball (1184), Second Floor, 43 Bath St, Glasgow, G2 1HW by December 30. Include name, address and phone number.

To enter by email, send your grid position (eg A1) to competitions@bigissue.com. Issue 1182 winner is Samantha Fairman from Ashford. balasport.co.uk



(Last week's Spot the Ball revealed:
Wimbledon V Liverpool, 1989)

Christmas word quiz

Adam Jacot de Boinod is the author of *The Meaning of Tingo and Other Extraordinary Words* (Penguin) and the creator of the iPhone App Tingo. His favourite seasonal word is yule-hole (Scots dialect), meaning the last hole to which a man could stretch his belt at a Christmas feast. Here, he poses a festive vocabulary quiz. Can you guess the correct definition of the following 10 words from the three options given?



1) hederated

- A) to be suffering from the effects of too much partying or drinking
- B) adorned with ivy
- C) dressed in a vividly patterned striped jumper

2) yaffle

- A) to refuse a gift
- B) staying seated at the dinner table when the meal is over to enjoy some conversation and other people's company
- C) to eat or drink especially noisily or greedily

3) pingle (Suffolk dialect)

- A) to move food about on the plate for want of an appetite
- B) to snow just a few flakes
- C) one who haunts good tables, a greedy sponger

4) engastration

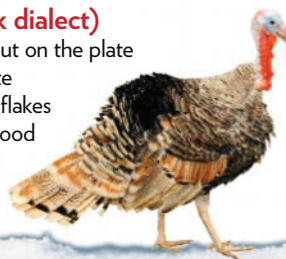
- A) the removal of all decoration
- B) the act of stuffing one bird into another
- C) the giving of something you no longer want as a present

5) crambazzled (Yorkshire dialect)

- A) full up after large dinner
- B) drunk
- C) prematurely aged through drink and a dissolute life

6) bonx (Essex dialect)

- A) to beat up batter for pudding
- B) to cover with artificial snow
- C) to convey a drunk home on a barrow

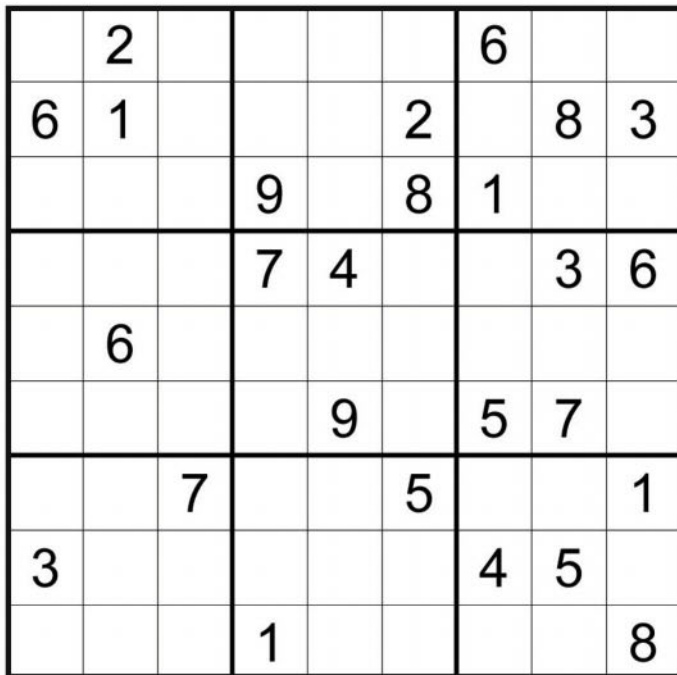




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Sudoku

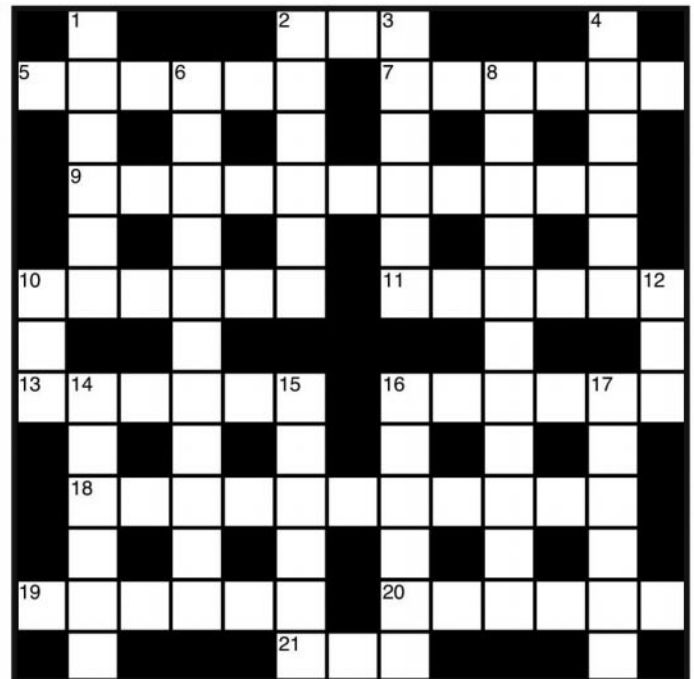


ISSUE 1183 SOLUTION

5	4	8	2	1	3	8	9	7
9	2	8	6	7	5	1	4	3
3	1	7	4	9	8	5	6	2
1	6	9	7	3	2	4	5	8
2	7	5	1	8	4	9	3	6
4	8	3	9	5	5	2	7	1
8	5	2	3	6	9	7	1	4
6	9	1	8	4	7	3	2	5
7	3	4	5	2	1	6	8	9

There is just one simple rule in sudoku: each row, column and 3 x 3 box must contain the numbers one to nine. This is a logic puzzle and you should not need to guess. The solution will be revealed next week.

Prize crossword



To win a Chambers Dictionary, send completed crosswords (either cryptic or quick) to: The Big Issue Crossword (1184), second floor, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW by December 30. Include your name, address and phone number. **Issue 1182 winner is Jennifer Knipe from Edinburgh.**

7) cosherer

- A) a snowless winter
- B) someone who feasts or lives upon the industry of others
- C) a hermit, a recluse

8) bubbly jock (Scottish dialect)

- A) a turkey
- B) a drunken reveller
- C) a song sung in turn by the guests at a banquet

9) trimens (Bristol dialect)

- A) the darkest part of winter
- B) Christmas decorations
- C) balls of snow on the feet

10) slapsauce

- A) to handle food in a messy way (often said of children)
- B) a person who enjoys eating fine food, a glutton
- C) gravy



Answers: (1B) adorned with ivy (2C) to eat or drink especially noisily or greedily (3A) to move or stuff one bird into want of an appetite (4B) the act of stuffing one bird into another (5C) prematurely aged through drink and a dissolute life (6A) to beat up better for pudding (7B) someone who feasts or lives upon the industry of others (8A) a turkey (9B) Christmas decorations (10B) a person who enjoys eating fine food, a glutton

CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

2. Accountants returned the bag (3)
5. Where preacher is seen to pulverise something (6)
7. Having no clothes in starting point (6)
9. Equivocal conflicting opinion I state shortly (11)
10. Move in more sheep (6)
11. Fearless lover is disheartened (6)
13. Quality of character of iron, perhaps, so to speak (6)
16. Swiss Cottage? (6)
18. Losing strength while suffering (11)
19. Quadruped - and strangely one that flies (6)
20. Capital place for having pride in plant (6)
21. Girl from the day before (3)

Down

1. Record rise in natural colour (6)
2. Boss takes one round the workroom (6)
3. Cajoled into making a firm cut (6)
4. Act as substitute at dental surgery? (4,2)
6. Doggedness its presence could bring (11)
8. During motor race a process of putting flesh on bones (11)
10. Does she keep silent? (3)
12. Receive expression of surprise, say, from an alien (3)
14. Nothing less than calorie could be in this cake! (6)
15. Like a horse, one of five in midweek (6)
16. Actors and actresses allowed most of the fortress (6)
17. Gone round to take horse in for a drink (6)

QUICK CLUES

Across

2. Expanse of water (3)
5. Pleasantly odd (6)
7. Alcoholic drink (6)
9. Need (11)
10. Civil force (6)
11. Compare (6)
13. Snooping (6)
16. Cited (6)
18. Barber (11)
19. Old custom (6)
20. Watching secretly (6)
21. Attempt (3)

Down

1. Paper size (6)
2. Long step (6)
3. State without proof (6)
4. Small bird (6)
6. Searching examination (11)
8. Peevishly (11)
10. Young dog (3)
12. Termination (3)
14. Reuse (6)
15. Tagged (anag.) (6)
16. Nauseous (6)
17. Quixotic (6)

Issue 1183 solution

CRYPTIC: Across - 1 Cabinet; 8 Hygiene; 9 Malaise; 10 Iceboat; 11 Lioness; 12 Musical; 14 Express; 18 Tapster; 20 Trounce; 21 Ennoble; 22 Reputed; 23 Shapely. Down - 1 Complimentary; 2 Bolton; 3 Noise; 4 Theism; 5 Ogreish; 6 Heroic; 7 Dental surgery; 13 Keynote; 15 Prompt; 16 Steeds; 17 Stable; 19 Panda.

QUICK: Across - 1 Jogging; 8 Oration; 9 Gradual; 10 Disused; 11 Epicene; 12 Nominee; 14 Piloted; 18 Upraise; 20 Kashmir; 21 Implant; 22 Roedean; 23 Gallery. Down - 1 Jiggery-pokery; 2 Goalie; 3 In use; 4 Golden; 5 Satsuma; 6 Nissen; 7 Inadvertently; 13 Stammer; 15 Listed; 16 During; 17 Tirade; 19 Repel.

WORD ON THE STREET

Every week Big Issue vendors share their views on life, the universe and everything in our My Pitch interviews. Here we revisit a few from 2015.

► **People are very kind in Hastings, they've been very good to me.** My customers bring me cups of tea and we have a chat. Thanks to them I finally managed to save up for a deposit to rent a little one-bedroom flat. I've put my name down for an allotment. My dad had a vegetable patch when I was growing up and he loved growing things. I'd like to do the same.

JEFF ARNOLD, 59
HASTINGS

In the early 1980s I was a ball girl at a women's tournament in Chichester, a sort of pre-tournament before Wimbledon. Martina Navratilova played. The year Andy Murray won was nuts here. It gave everyone a great lift. An American photographer who comes every year to take photos of the tennis lets me choose some of his photos – I have one of the Queen with President Obama.

JANE BURNS, 48
WIMBLEDON

I'm trying to learn to cook a bit better – one of my regular customers bought me a student cookbook. There's a kitchen at the hostel and I'm trying to do simple things like spaghetti bolognese. You're never too old to learn new things.

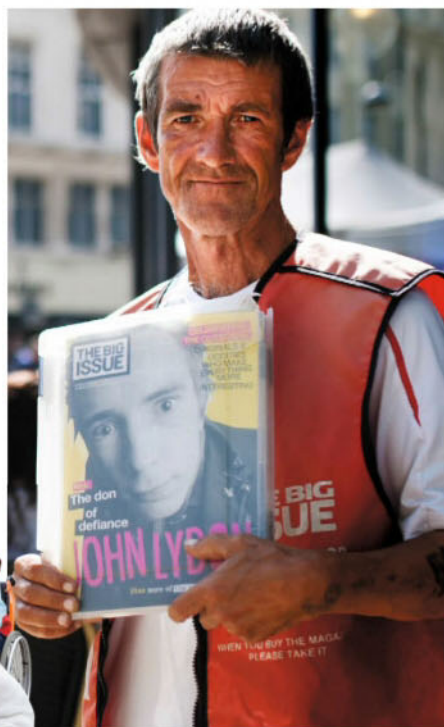
SHAY MONROE, AGE 46
OUTSIDE NATWEST, OXFORD



Paul Gascoigne is one of my regulars. I see him most weeks. A couple of Bournemouth players buy the magazine as well. They come over with their wives and kids and bring me a coffee. They'll be playing in the Premier League next season, which is exciting.



JANET BOWERS, 42
BOURNEMOUTH



► **I play chess and I read a lot.**

There's something about a new book. The first page, the first paragraph, the sense of 'OK, here we go'. There's something special about that. I had a leather-bound complete collection of Charles Dickens but it got stolen many years ago. *Barnaby Rudge*, *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *A Tale of Two Cities* were probably the greatest. Dickens certainly beats all the celebrity autobiographies on the bookshelves.

DREW MUIRCROFT, 54
OUTSIDE THE BODY SHOP, BATH

► **I really want to say thank you to my customers.**

They check I am all right, they can tell when I'm just putting on a smile. I have gone back to college on a customer service course through The Big Issue. It gives me something up-to-date on my CV.

SHARON TUMMON, 43
CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET



We now have a small house in Bordesley Green. My children go to school there and are happy. We are settling in to the area. If it's nice outside the children love going to the park, playing on the swings. My hobby is cooking – I love to bake cakes and muffins for the children.

CLAUDIA CIUCA, 33
OUTSIDE SAINSBURY'S, KING'S HEATH, BIRMINGHAM



My dad died of cancer last Christmas.

Remembering him will probably hit me hard, hit me like a hammer actually. We were both big football fans, and I would have loved to go to one last Chelsea match with him. The support my customers gave me trying to get through things has been unbelievable. You've no idea what a difference it makes to have people who care and take an interest. I've sold the magazine at Notting Hill occasionally, outside the

Electric Cinema. Hugh Grant has come out of the cinema a few times, and he's come over and talked to me for ages, asked me how I've been. A really, really nice guy.

An absolute diamond.
CHRIS MCCORMACK, 49
MAIDA VALE, LONDON



I love everything about

Edinburgh. There is never nothing to do, even if you're skint. There are so many free things and it is a beautiful city. I also cycle to the countryside. If it stays sunny, I will go to North Berwick. The waters are blue, the sands are clean, you don't feel like you are in Scotland any more.

MARTIN MACKENZIE, 33
EDINBURGH



Read more of our vendor quotes online
bigissue.com

URGENT CHRISTMAS APPEAL

What's it really like to be homeless at Christmas? Facing a bitterly cold Christmas without a home is much worse than most of us can imagine.

You're frozen to the bone, blasted by the wind and rain, never able to get warm and dry. There's nowhere safe, nowhere to keep your things, nowhere to go out from or come back to. Your health can crumble and there's nothing you can do about it. Some people think it's a laugh to abuse you or be violent to you, just because they can. It's nothing short of brutal.

Did you know that the average age of death for someone who's homeless is just 47 years old?

That's why Crisis at Christmas is so important. Crisis is the national charity for single homeless people. We're dedicated to ending homelessness and changing lives, and for us Christmas is crucial. If we can welcome homeless people with the offer of a good meal and good company, it can be the start of getting them off the streets and out of homelessness for good.

We need your help today. Please can you reserve a place for just £22.29?

This Christmas, we want to be ready to welcome more guests than ever – and that is why your gift could be so important. To reserve one place costs just **£22.29**; two places **£44.58**; and **£222.90** would pay for a whole table, giving ten people a day to remember and a whole fresh start.



Please reserve a place for someone who's homeless at Crisis at Christmas. Your help could change someone's life. Visit www.crisis.org.uk, call 0800 999 2060 or return the form.

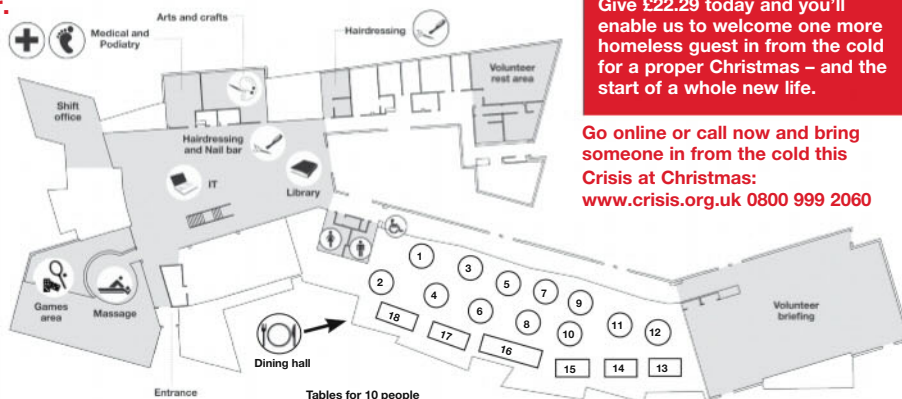
Reserve a place – for just £22.29 per person – and you'll provide more than just a hot meal. You'll also provide a shower, fresh clothes, a health check, housing and job advice, a bed for the night if needed, plus an introduction to Crisis' year-round services for training and support for the future.

Crisis at Christmas must open on 22 December. Please reply as soon as you can. Thank you.

Be part of our plan for Crisis at Christmas 2015

Here's what people like you helped us to provide last year.

-  Hot Christmas dinners for more than 4,300 guests
-  Health checks
-  Clean clothes and hot showers
-  Housing and employment advice
-  Support for dealing with addiction
-  Sports, arts and games sessions



Give £22.29 today and you'll enable us to welcome one more homeless guest in from the cold for a proper Christmas – and the start of a whole new life.

Go online or call now and bring someone in from the cold this Crisis at Christmas: www.crisis.org.uk 0800 999 2060

Please reserve places at Crisis at Christmas. Here's my gift of:

- ☐ **£22.29** (1 place) ☐ **£44.58** (2 places) ☐ **£222.90** (10 places) ☐ **£** _____ (Other)

Payment details

I enclose a cheque/charity voucher/postal order payable to **Crisis**

Or please debit my card using the details below:

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Other: _____

Card no.

Expiry date

Title _____ First name _____ Last name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

The Crisis Promise: Your donation will help fund Crisis at Christmas and enable Crisis to provide year-round services for homeless people. We will never sell your details to other organisations, but we would like to update you on our work and send you appeals from time to time. If you would prefer not to receive these, please call **08000 38 48 38** or email supporter.helpline@crisis.org.uk

To make your donation visit www.crisis.org.uk, call free on 0800 999 2060 or post to: ROOM 080, FREEPOST, CRISIS AT CHRISTMAS

Make every pound you give worth 25% more to Crisis by ticking this Gift Aid declaration.

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* I want all donations I've made to Crisis four years previous to today's date and all donations in the future to be Gift Aid until I notify you otherwise. By ticking this form I am confirming that I am paying an amount of Income and/or Capital Gains Tax (not VAT or Council Tax for example) at least equal to the tax that charities and CASCs will reclaim on my donations in the tax year.

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